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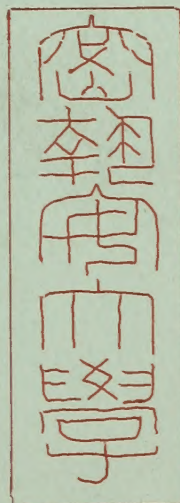
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CITY OF CATS

by Lao Sheh

translated by James E. Dew

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CENTER FOR CHINESE STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

James I. Crump, Jr.
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-- translated by James E. DEW

Ann Arbor, Michigan

貓城記

CITY OF CATS

by Lao Sheh
Shu, Ch'ing-ch'un



Translated by James E. Dew

Illustrations by W. Lewis

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Printed in the United States of America

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Calligraphy on title page by Yiu-fong Dew

PREFACE

Durable satire is perhaps the rarest of literary phenomena. Yesterday's burning issues have a way of becoming today's ashes. The best satires in English have had in them strong strains of adventure and action--the first half of Butler's Erewhon is still very readable, but the allegorical second half drags--to recommend them to later ages. Mao Ch'eng Chi has always been deficient in this respect; Lao Sheh devoted no more than a paragraph to the arrival of his eye-witness on the planet Mars, for example. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of poignancy in the book, for it was written by an author who, though he had not reached the height of his creative powers, was at least a free agent and frank critic of his country and the forces which held it in captivity. Those who read it today with an eye to the past it satirizes will be reminded of many things which are too easily forgotten; those who read it as an almost forgotten creation from the hand of one of modern China's finest literary craftsmen will be moved, I believe, by the great change which has taken place. The free agent, the frank critic is no more and some of the distempers of China which he satirized are gone--all have been drowned in a sea of "dee-doong-dee-doong hualovsky".

J. I. C.

INTRODUCTION

Mao Ch'eng Chi, or City of Cats, is a social and political satire. Written in the early 1930's¹ it is a thinly disguised representation of contemporary China. The "Cat City" of the title is the capital of Catland, on the planet Mars, a country whose inhabitants look like cats but behave like men—men whose civilization is dying. Catland has the longest history and the most ancient culture of any country on Mars, but this culture is now in the last stages of disintegration. The society of the country has been completely debilitated by consumption of an enervating leaf which produces all the effects we associate with opium, but which is also a symbol of something even more harmful. The educational system has, after fruitless attempts at modernization, fallen into complete ruin. In political and economic affairs there is nothing but contention and superficial attempts to imitate the systems of neighboring countries, the most recently discovered of these systems and the one that is currently the rage among the revolutionists being one in which "everybody works for everybody" and the laborers and peasants are the chosen members of society. Military and government officials are self-seeking profiteers, completely unconcerned about the welfare of the people of the country, and the "nation" is rapidly preparing itself for annihilation at the hands of the least progressive of its scientific fellow nations.

One need not read far in the history of "modern" China to find parallels for the ills ascribed to Catland. In the second and third decades of this century China was in political and economic chaos. A land with a long history as the unchallenged cultural center of Asia, it had not been able to adjust to the changes that were being brought about in the world by the countries of the West, where there had been an industrial revolution and the birth of a "scientific age," and by her next-door neighbor, Japan, which country had been quick to learn the techniques and ideas of the new age. China had overthrown her old system of monarchical government but had not succeeded in replacing it with a republican form—or any other form. She had abandoned her traditional methods of education, but she had not been able to set up a new system. The masses of the people were poverty-stricken, ignorant and passive. The people who had power were factional and, for the most part, interested primarily in personal gain. Movements for modernization and emancipation from the yoke of foreign oppression swept the country, sometimes violently, but without accomplishing much. There were those who were sincere in their desire to work for country rather than self, but they were unable to bring about the changes that would have to come before China could be a "modern nation." When Japan invaded Manchuria in September of 1931, China could only protest to the world and call feebly for help in throwing the aggressor out. When in January of 1932 the Japanese gave the mayor of Shanghai the choice of calling an end to the

1. The time of writing is probably 1932. Most of the references I have found (e.g., Chao Yen-sheng in the "Short Biographies of Authors" section of Father Joseph Schyns' 1500 Modern Chinese Novels & Plays, p. 84, and Jean Monsterleet in Sommets de la littérature chinoise contemporaine, p. 155) give 1933 as the date of first publication. The author himself says (in Lao Niu P'o Ch'e, p. 43) that it was first serialized in Hsien-tai magazine then published in book form by the Hsien-tai Book Company. He does not give a date, but says that City of Cats was written at the request of the editor of that magazine for a novel for serial publication, and remarks that after the Battle of Shanghai (Hu chan) Hsien-tai was the only literary monthly of quality being published. From this I judge that it was after the Japanese attack on Shanghai early in 1932 that the novel was written. The date 1933 given by the sources mentioned above probably refers to the first publication in book form.

Père Henri van Boven, in his Histoire de la Littérature chinoise moderne, says that Lao Sheh published City of Cats in 1925, during his stay in London, but this early date seems quite unlikely, because of internal evidence as well as external. As pointed out above, the writing of the novel must have followed the Japanese attack on Shanghai. Also, the author indicates (Lao Niu P'o Ch'e, p. 43) that City of Cats was written after Ta-ming Hu, which itself was written while the author was in Chinan, after his return from England (Ibid., p. 37). As internal evidence of a date later than 1925, we have the description (Ch. 18) of Catland's Red Rope Army, the counterpart of which did not exist in China before 1927. Also, I think it is very likely that when the author wrote of Catland's invasion by dwarf soldiers from another country he had uppermost in his mind Japan's invasion of Manchuria, attack on Shanghai, and continued pressure on China.

boycott of Japanese goods there or seeing Japanese troops moved into the city, the mayor declared the boycott at an end and saw Japanese troops moved into the city.

This is the China which Lao Sheh (i.e., Shu Ch'ing-ch'un), in City of Cats, is holding up to ridicule, trying to stir his fellow Chinese by venom to realization of its imminent destruction and to action to prevent this destruction.

Lao Sheh claims that this work is a failure. He says that in writing it he made the mistake of abandoning the humorous style for which he had a special talent, and therefore, as he lacked the "fierce pen and brilliant mind" necessary to write good satire without humor, "City of Cats could not but crawl on the ground like a bird with a broken wing."² He says that the work has the common fault of satires --lack of positive proposals and constructive ideas--and it really accomplished nothing except to show the author's disappointment with existing conditions. And that though "I am not willing to admit to being a genuine idiot, yet, as I wrote City of Cats, I must call myself a fool."³

The author is of course being very modest. As far as literary quality goes, City of Cats is not the best of his works. The style is excessively repetitious and is sometimes confused. The novel as a whole should have been more carefully constructed, and the satire is not as subtle as that of the better satirists in Western literature. Nor did publication of the work cure China's ills. It is, however, solid evidence of the author's perspicacity and an unquestionably apt satirization of the China of that time--and that, after all, is what it was intended to be.

There are parallels in the history of China in the first thirty years of this century for the characterizations and descriptions found on nearly every page of City of Cats. A thorough comparison and exposition of these parallels would make a paper as long as the translation itself. I have been content to note a few comparisons, more or less at random, between the affairs and events described in City of Cats and Chinese affairs and events as described in various non-fiction publications. These will be found at the end of the translation.

The translation is abridged to approximately two-thirds the length of the original. Because of the repetitious style of the Chinese, a certain amount of abridgement was possible without doing any damage to the original work, and was indeed necessary to make readable English. I have, however, gone beyond this first step in condensation and left out a number of minor incidents, and two or three of larger size, which were not of first level importance to the objectives of the satire and not necessary to the construction of the story.

JAMES E. DEW
1958

Post scriptum: Since the above was written, I have seen Professor Cyril Birch's excellent "Lao Sheh: The Humourist in his Humour" (China Quarterly No. 8 (1961) 45-62 where he says much of what I have tried to say, only better.

2. Shu, Lao Niu P'o Ch'e, pp. 44-45.

3. Ibid., pp. 45-46.

CITY OF CATS

If the flies hadn't awakened me, I might have slept on and on, perhaps forever. They looked like little green butterflies, very pretty, but they were many times more bothersome than ordinary flies. Every time I moved my hand they rose in a swarm.

I was very dirty from having slept on the floor. These people probably didn't even have a word for "bed." Swatting flies with one hand and scratching myself with the other, I examined the room. The dirt floor served as a bed, thus making unnecessary the most important item of a bedroom. I looked for a basin, hoping to wash off some of the dirt and sweat that had collected on my body, but there was none to be found. The walls and roof were made entirely of mud, without any ornamentation. The room consisted simply of four walls enclosing a mass of putrid air, nothing else.

In one wall there was an opening about three feet high. This was the door, and if a window was wanted it was that too. I crawled out through this little opening and found myself in a dark forest--probably the one I had seen yesterday before I lost consciousness. The forest was so dense that the rays of the sun could not penetrate it, but there was no breeze and it was steaming hot.

The cat-like man who had rescued me was hiding in a tree and refused to come down until I started to climb the tree after him. I pointed to my mouth to let him know I was hungry and thirsty. He understood and pointed to the trees. I thought he meant that I should eat fruit, but there was no fruit on the trees. He climbed a tree and with great care pulled four or five leaves. He put one of these into his mouth, then laid the others on the ground and pointed at me and at the leaves.

I didn't like being fed as if I were a sheep, but I saw that neither of us would benefit by my getting angry. I picked up the leaves and brushed them off with my hand. My hands were dirty and were covered with blood stains from the scratches received getting out of the wrecked airplane, but I thought nothing of this as I tried to brush the leaves clean. I put a leaf into my mouth. It was very fragrant and juicy. Some of the juice dripped from the corners of my mouth and the cat man looked as if he wanted to come over and catch the drops that fell. These leaves must be very valuable, I thought, though I couldn't understand why one or two leaves should be so important when there was a whole forest of them here.

Eating two more leaves in quick succession, I began to feel dizzy, though not at all uncomfortable. I felt as if that little bit of precious juice had not only gone to my stomach but had penetrated throughout my body, immediately relaxing all my muscles. My stomach no longer felt empty and my mind was becoming muddled. I felt sleepy, but knew I couldn't sleep, and in my befuddlement I felt a slight itchiness. It was like a mild drunkenness. I still held one leaf in my hand but the hand was as relaxed and lazy as though it had just awakened from a good sleep; it didn't have the energy to raise itself up again. In my mind I wanted to laugh, but I couldn't say for sure whether there was a smile on my face. I leaned against a big tree and closed my eyes. In a moment I felt a couple of gentle flashes go through my head and the drunkenness was gone. The pores of my skin all felt as light and relaxed as if they had been about to laugh--if pores can laugh. I no longer felt hungry or thirsty, and my body no longer wanted to be washed. The mud, sweat and blood stuck comfortably to my flesh, and I felt that if I weren't to wash again for a lifetime it would still be comfortable.

The forest atmosphere that had been unbearably hot was now neither too hot nor too cold, and the air no longer stank but had a thick, sweet fragrance like a ripe muskmelon. "Happy" would not describe my mood. Numb. Yes, numb, that was it.

I squatted against the tree and looked at my cat friend. (I had never liked to squat, but now that was the only way I was comfortable.) He wore no clothes. His waist was very long and very thin. His arms and legs were very short, as were his fingers and toes. His neck was long and he could turn his head around to the back. His face was large, with two very, very large eyes set very low, leaving a great broad forehead. The forehead was covered with fine hair, which grew right up to the hair on the top of his head. The nose and mouth were joined together, but not into a handsome muzzle like a cat's; more like a pig's. The ears were small and set on the top of his head. His whole body

was covered with fine, very glossy hair which changed colors like a piece of camlet, appearing gray at close range, taking on a green tint when seen from a distance. His torso was round (he could probably roll sideways very easily) and on his breast there were four pairs of nipples--eight little black spots.

What his internal construction was like, I had no way of knowing.

I wondered why he had brought me here, but as we didn't speak the same language I had no way of asking him.

2

After three or four months time I had learned the language of the cat people. It was extremely simple; with four or five hundred words turned one way and another you could say everything. Naturally there were many affairs and principles that could not be made clear this easily, but the cat people had a way--ignore them. There were not many adjectives and adverbs, nor was there a wealth of nouns. Everything that looked like a poppi tree (the leaf of the poppi tree was that treasure that had the power to make people numb) was a poppi tree: big poppi tree, small poppi tree, round poppi tree, pointed poppi tree, foreign poppi tree, big foreign poppi tree--though these were definitely different trees. As most verbs were taken care of by gestures, one need only remember a few nouns in order to carry on a conversation. Their writing system, on the other hand, was terribly complicated--little tower-like characters that were very difficult to recognize. The common people of Catland could remember only ten or so.

Big Sye--that was my cat friend's name--knew quite a number of characters and could even write poetry. Just put a few nice-sounding nouns together--they needn't carry the simplest thought--and you have a cat poem. Precious leaf, precious flower, precious mountain, precious cat, precious belly--this was Big Sye's "Feelings Engendered by the Study of History."

As soon as I learned the language I understood everything. Big Sye was an important personage of Catland. He was a big landlord, a politician, a poet and a military officer. He was a big landlord because he had a big grove of poppi trees and the poppi leaf was the food in Catland. And his taking me in had a definite connection with the poppi leaf.

Big Sye got out his history books to tell me the story. (The books were all made of stone, each tablet about two feet square by a half an inch thick, with ten or fifteen extremely complicated characters on each one.) Five hundred years ago the cat people had planted and harvested and had never heard of anything called poppi. Then a foreigner brought it into Catland. At first only the upper classes could afford to eat it, then later the poppi tree was imported and everyone became addicted to it. In less than fifty years time anyone who didn't eat it was exceptional. Eating poppi was so comforting and so trouble-saving . . . but there was one drawback. After eating it, no matter how energetic a person's spirit might be his arms and legs didn't want to move. Therefore the farmers quit farming and the workers quit working. Everybody just relaxed. Then the government issued an order: "Eating poppi is forbidden." But at noon on the day the order was issued the Empress's craving for poppi led her to give the Emperor three slaps on the mouth (Big Sye moved one of the history tablets aside), and the Emperor himself so hungered for it that the tears flowed. In the afternoon of the same day another order was issued: "Poppi is proclaimed the national food."

Big Sye said that in all the history of Catland there was no event more glorious or more benevolent than this. In the four hundred odd years since the poppi leaf was made the national food, Catland's cultural advance had accelerated several fold. When people eat poppi they don't do physical labor and therefore have more time for mental activities. Poetry, for example, had made great advances. In all the preceding twenty thousand years of Catland's history there had never before been a poet, for instance, who had turned that beautiful phrase "precious belly."

However, this is not to say that there had not been any political or social disturbances. Three hundred years ago the cultivation of poppi trees was widespread, but the more poppi people ate the lazier they got, until finally many people were too lazy even to grow poppi trees. Then there was a big flood--Big Sye's gray face paled; the cat people are deathly afraid of water for any purpose--and many poppi groves were destroyed. If they are without anything else to eat, cat people can get along all right, but when they have no poppi they can't rest. Thievery sprang up everywhere. There were more cases of theft than the police could handle, so the government made a very humane proclamation: stealing poppi to eat was not to be considered a crime. Thus these past three hundred years have been a time of thievery. Nor is this a bad thing. Thievery is a very fitting indicator of individual freedom and freedom has since the beginning of history been the cat people's most exalted principle.

"Then why do you still raise trees?" I asked in cat language. In real cat language terms this sentence was: a twist of the neck (to indicate "then"), roll my eyes twice ("why"), point ("you"), "tree" (a verb), "tree" (noun). There was no way to express "still."

Big Sye's mouth closed for a moment. The cat people's mouths are always open; if one of them suddenly closes his mouth it is a sign of satisfaction or deep thought. His reply was: "There are only a few score men who raise trees now, and they are all men with a lot of power--men who are at one and the same time politicians, army officers, poets and landowners. If they didn't raise trees they would lose their power. To get along in politics poppi is necessary, otherwise there is no way to get audience with the emperor. To be an army officer poppi is necessary because it is the ration for the troops. A poet must have poppi because it has the power to make him have dreams in the daytime. In sum, the poppi leaf is all-powerful. If you have it you can walk sideways across the world." ("Walk sideways" was the cat men's most admired bon mot.)

Thinking of ways to protect the poppi groves was the most absorbing task Big Sye and the other landowners had. Although they had soldiers, the soldiers could not do this work for them. As the cat soldiers were firm believers in freedom, they didn't hesitate to disobey orders and steal from the men who hired them--according to the cat people's way of thinking this was all quite logical. Then who protected the poppi groves? Foreigners. Every landowner had to hire a few foreigners to protect the groves. Fear of foreigners was a peculiarity of cat men's natures. Because of their belief in freedom, five soldiers could not live together three days without the life of one of them being in danger, but to fight with a foreigner was an impossibility. Big Sye added, with a satisfied expression: "Day by day our talent for self-massacre increases. Thinking of ways to kill people exercises the ingenuity almost as much as composing poetry."

"Killing people has become an art," I said. Cat language didn't have the term "art," and after I had spent an hour trying to explain it he still didn't understand, although he remembered the Chinese word I used.

In ancient times they had fought with foreign countries and had won victories but during the past five hundred years they had been quite content with self-massacre, which had made them forget all thought of fighting with foreigners and turn their total attention inward. Therefore they were terribly afraid of all foreigners. If it weren't for the services of foreigners their emperor wouldn't even be able to eat poppi.

Big Sye explained to me that at the time of my arrival several landowners were without foreigners to protect their poppi groves and there was stiff competition to secure my services. When my plane crashed they knew a foreigner had arrived. They got together and agreed to hire me as a group and take turns using me. They were shocked and frightened when they saw me because they had expected me to look like other foreigners. They had no idea there were other planets; they thought I would be from some other country on Mars. But they would lose their poppi groves if they didn't find someone to guard them, so they summoned all their courage and captured me. After they had put leg-irons on me and locked me in a little hut by the river they all went home to eat poppi and recuperate. Big Sye went back, thinking to take me home with him and make me his own, but when he arrived at the hut he saw that some of the others had had the same idea. It was only because the others had been frightened away when I fired my pistol that Big Sye had managed to bring me home with him. "We are lucky to

have that art," he said, pointing to my pistol. He had taken to applying the term "art" to anything he didn't understand or couldn't easily describe.

I asked him what the strange material that my leg-irons had been made of was. He shook his head and told me only that it was something from abroad. "Many very useful things come from abroad," he said, "but we don't condescend to imitate them. We are the most ancient of all countries."

I asked him where he lived. As there was nothing in the poppi grove except the little hut I was staying in, I thought he surely must have a house someplace else. He appeared unwilling to answer--asked me for an art to take and show to the Emperor. I gave him a match and questioned him no further. I thought that in such a freedom-loving society as this everyone should have a few secrets.

"After we harvest the poppi leaves I'll return home. You can go with me."

He has still other uses for me, I thought. "Where is your home?" I asked.

"In the capital. The Emperor lives there. There are many foreigners. You can see your friends."

"I'm from Earth and I don't know anyone on Mars."

"In any case, you're a foreigner, and all foreigners are friends."

No use trying to explain further to him. I only hoped that the poppi would soon be harvested and I could have a look at the Cat City.

3

I saw that I could never be good friends with Big Sye. It was soon clear to me that if the cat people had any concept of sincerity it must mean something like "self-centeredness." Their only reason for making friends was to use them for their own profit. I wanted to return to the place where our plane had come down. The friend who had come from China with me had been killed in the crash and I had had no chance to bury his remains before the cat people captured me. Big Sye wouldn't tell me where the place was, nor would he let me out of his sight. He couldn't understand why I wanted to go back. He said, "He's dead. He's already dead. Why do you still want to go see him?" Whenever I brought the subject up he would start complaining about his own troubles, trying to get sympathy from me and to make me forget what I had on my mind.

I decided that I would not eat poppi any more. Big Sye said this was impossible. If I didn't eat poppi I would be thirsty, and water was not easy to obtain. Furthermore I would want to bathe, and think how much trouble that would be! And other foods were expensive. Not only were they expensive, they didn't taste good either. And there was poison in the air, which would slowly kill me if I didn't eat poppi for protection against it. But all his arguments were of no avail. I had made up my mind. I knew that if I ate poppi I would become just like the cat people, and I didn't want that. I wanted to live like a human being, to eat and to bathe. I didn't want to become a person half dead. I'd rather live like a human if only for ten or fifteen days than live half dead for a thousand years.

I explained this to Big Sye, but he refused to understand my point of view. Finally I threatened him with my pistol and he arranged to have food brought to me every day.

My next battle was to persuade Big Sye to let me go to the river every day to bathe. Of course, he didn't want to take such a long walk with me every morning, and he didn't want to let me go alone for fear I wouldn't come back to him.

"You needn't go with me. I'll promise not to run away," I said.

He shook his head: "Only children at play make promises."

My temper flared. This was a direct insult. I grabbed a handful of the fine hair on the top of his head. This was the first time I had used physical force and my action took him completely by surprise, because what he had said was, after all, true. Sacrificing a few hairs and perhaps a little piece of skin from the top of his head, he pulled loose and ran off some distance. Then he explained to me that at one time cat people honored promises but the practice had fallen into disuse. Although it was not a bad thing to trust people, it was not always convenient. And now there were no promises made in Catland except when children made them as a joke.

"Whether or not you trust people is not my affair, but my word is still good," I said very forcefully. "I won't run away. If at any time I decide to leave you, I will tell you openly."

"Then you won't let me go with you to the river?" he asked uncertainly.

"Suit yourself!" And I considered the question settled.

After that I went out before daylight every morning and went to the river to bathe.

One morning as I was bathing I noticed several shadows on the bank in the dim light of the dawn. I paid no attention to them until full daylight came and I saw that a big crowd had collected. I wondered if something was happening nearby that had attracted so many people. Then I noticed that every time I went under the water a loud "Oh!" went up from the people on the shore, and finally I realized that they had all come to watch me bathe.

For people who had never seen anyone bathe before, perhaps it would be an interesting spectacle. Certainly they did not come to see my body. A nude body was nothing to them, as they wore no clothes at all. I wondered whether I should entertain them with a few more dives or come out of the water. Then I saw Big Sye. He was standing near the water's edge, several yards in front of the rest of the crowd, as if to show that he was not afraid of me. When he saw me looking at him he motioned for me to dive again. I already knew the ways of the cat people well enough now to know that it would give him a lot of face if I would follow his directions. But I was in no mood to give him this satisfaction. I walked out of the water, whereupon the spectators scattered and disappeared.

I caught hold of Big Sye and asked him what he meant by bringing people to watch me, but I could get no coherent answer from him.

When this continued morning after morning and I could not get Big Sye to make the people stay away so that I could have privacy, I decided to take some action myself. One morning I suddenly ran out of the water, intending to catch one of the spectators and make him tell me why they persisted in coming to watch me. The crowd stampeded in terror, scattering in all directions--except for a few who were left lying on the ground. I looked at one of these and saw that his eyes were closed. Apparently he had been frightened to death. Another was crawling away with a broken leg, and another lay dead. This was almost too much for me to bear. I regretted what I had done. I had had no idea my action would have such disastrous results.

As there was nothing I could do to repair the damage I had done, I decided to take advantage of being left alone and go look for the bones of my dead friend. But before I had gone far I heard a shout and looked around to see Big Sye running after me. He was terribly excited and was shouting for me to come back to the poppi grove with him. He was being robbed. Other cat men were plundering his poppi grove.

I told him that I would go back with him if he would explain the affair at the river to me. After much pleading with me not to bargain but to come immediately to save his property, he finally agreed to this. I started back with him and on the way he told his story: The crowd at the river were all people from the city, upper class people. Naturally upper class people did not ordinarily get up so early in the morning, but they rarely had an opportunity to see anyone bathe. In addition Big Sye

brought out every morning a supply of his most luscious poppi leaves for the guests. For meal and floor show he charged each of them ten "national souls" (Catland's unit of money), and so made a handsome profit by displaying me.

Hearing this didn't make me any more fond of Big Sye, but I dropped the matter for the time being. I was more concerned at the moment about the two people who had been killed at the river. I asked Big Sye who would bear the responsibility for their deaths.

"You scared them to death--no matter. If I killed someone, I would lose a few poppi leaves over it. Poppi is everything; the law is nothing more than a few lines of characters carved on a stone. Anyone who has poppi can kill with impunity. But if you kill a person no one will bother you. Catland's laws do not apply to foreigners. You won't have to pay even one poppi leaf. Oh, how I wish I were a foreigner!"



4

When we arrived at the grove the thieves had disappeared. No doubt they had seen us coming. The poppi grove was beautiful, with the leaves ripe and succulent looking, some of them as big as the palm of my hand. Every day from morning till night big crowds of people stood outside the grove looking at it. No, they weren't "looking," because they all had their eyes closed. They were poking their noses out as far as they could to breathe in the thick fragrance of the leaves. Saliva dribbled from their slack mouths, and every time a leaf fell from a tree--they seemed to be able to sense this with their noses--they all opened their eyes and made as if to move forward, though they knew they couldn't go into the grove.

Big Sye had brought in five hundred soldiers to protect the poppi, but they were all stationed at least a mile away from the grove. If they had been any closer they could not have resisted the temptation to steal. Soldiers had to be brought in, however, because according to the customs of Catland the poppi harvest was a most important affair and it must be protected by soldiers. Everyone knew that Catland's soldiers could protect nothing for anyone, but Big Sye was an important personage in the public eye and wasn't one to flaunt custom.

Whenever the breeze rose a little and blew in the direction of the soldiers' camp Big Sye immediately ordered them to withdraw another half mile. The only reason the soldiers obeyed Big Sye's orders was because I was there. If it hadn't been for my presence they would have been unmanageable. "One cough from a foreigner panics five hundred Catland soldiers," was a common saying.

Besides the five hundred soldiers, Big Sye had twenty personal officers who were really protecting the grove. These twenty were all loyal and dependable men, though sometimes when they were in high spirits they would tie Big Sye up and steal a few poppi leaves. In reality it was because I was there and they didn't dare let their spirits get high so that they couldn't loyally and dependably protect the poppi.

5

The poppi was harvested. The temperature had dropped ten or fifteen degrees and there was a breeze every day. Black clouds floated in the gray sky but there was no rain. The beginning of winter was the time when landowners took their poppi into the city. Although Big Sye wasn't exactly content with my behavior, he had to put on an air of friendliness because he needed me on the trip into the city. Without me he could not make the trip in safety. He would be in danger of losing his life for protecting his poppi.

When the poppi leaves had all been dried they were tied in bundles and soldiers formed in teams of two to carry them, the two soldiers taking turns carrying one bundle of leaves on their heads. At the front of the procession four soldiers raised Big Sye off the ground. He stretched out horizontally. Four cat heads supported his back, two other cat soldiers carried his legs, and another brought up the rear

supporting his head. In Catland this method of travel was the most esteemed, even if it wasn't the most comfortable. The twenty personal officers carried musical instruments and marched along both sides of the column. If the soldiers did not behave themselves--for example if one of them should scratch a hole in a bundle in order to smell the fragrance of the poppi--these officers would immediately report them to Big Sye. In Catland everything had to have a discernible purpose; thus the musicians were also proctors or informers.

My position was in the middle of the procession so that I could look after the front and the rear. Big Sye also ordered seven men to carry me, but I preferred to walk on the ground. Quoting the classics as proof, he insisted that this was the only proper way for a person of standing to travel. He explained that the Emperor had twenty-one bearers, a prince had fifteen, and an important personage had seven. This was an ancient tradition, an indication of social standing, and it could not be broken.

I was still not willing to be carried, and Big Sye quoted a proverb: "When a man of importance walks on the ground the spirits of his ancestors are disturbed."

I told him that the spirits of my ancestors would certainly not be disturbed, and almost in tears, he quoted more poetry: "Lift your face and eat poppi leaves; travel lying down and be a man of standing."

"You men of standing are a lying bunch of bastards!" I couldn't quote an appropriate line of verse, so I replied with crudity. Big Sye gasped. I knew he was cursing me under his breath, but he dared not speak out so that I could hear him.

More than two hours had been wasted getting the column in order. Big Sye took his position on the seven cat heads then climbed to the ground again to go back and try to get the soldiers in straight lines. The soldiers had seen that relations between Big Sye and me were not completely smooth and now they were not as much afraid of him as they had been. After climbing up seven times and getting back down again six, he gave up and ordered the march to begin.

Just as we started to move several big white-tailed vultures flew over. Again Big Sye jumped down. "When vultures fly over a party just setting out, it is a bad omen. We'll wait until tomorrow to go."

I pulled out my pistol. "Whoever doesn't go now, will never go again."

Big Sye's face turned green. He gasped once or twice but couldn't say a word. He knew he'd get nowhere arguing with me but he knew also that it was dangerous to ignore omens. He hesitated for a few minutes then climbed up on his perch again and we moved off. He was so upset that his whole body was trembling and before we had gone far he had fallen to the ground a half dozen times. He was not one to break the ancient traditions, however, and every time he fell he climbed right back up.

Every place along the road that had enough smooth space to write a few characters--trees, rocks, broken-down walls--had been covered with big white characters: "Welcome Big Sye!" "Big Sye: A Great Man; the Farmer's Friend." "Big Sye's soldiers carry the clubs of orthodox principle!" "Thanks to Big Sye we have a bounteous harvest!" Of course all these were written by people Big Sye had sent ahead to prepare the way.

As we passed through several small villages I noticed the villagers were all sitting with their backs against broken-down walls and when the soldiers passed they would close their eyes. This puzzled me at first. If they were afraid of the soldiers, why didn't they run and hide; if they weren't afraid, why did they close their eyes? Then I looked closer and saw what was going on. This was the village's way of welcoming Big Sye. Faint characters were written in the fine grey hair on the top of their heads. There was one character atop each head and several heads together spelled out the slogan: "Welcome Big Sye!"

If I had been alone it would have taken me only half a day to walk to the Cat City, but walking with cat soldiers was an exercise in patience. Cat people can move very fast when they want to, but as soon as they become soldiers they lose all their speed. Since marching into battle at high speed just sent

them to death that much sooner, they have learned how to hide slowness behind an appearance of speed. They move very slowly until they sight the enemy, then with a burst of speed they retreat.

There were scattered black clouds in the sky, but by one o'clock in the afternoon the rays of the sun were scorching hot. The soldiers' mouths were hanging open and the fine hair on their bodies was plastered down with sweat. I've never seen a sorrier looking lot of soldiers. When we came in sight of a poppi grove, Big Sye gave the order to turn and march in that direction. I thought he was doing this out of consideration for the troops, in order to give them a chance to rest in the shade for a while, but when we had almost reached the trees he jumped to the ground and came back to talk to me. He wanted to know if I would help him sack this poppi grove. "To steal a few poppi leaves is not so important, but it would be a very good thing to give the soldiers a little fighting practice," he explained. I told him that if he wanted to plunder someone else's grove that was his affair, I wanted nothing to do with it.

The soldiers had not waited for Big Sye's order but had already begun to put down their bundles and run toward the poppi grove. Soon they all disappeared into the trees. But no sooner had the last soldier gone into the grove than there was a great outcry and they all came running back. They had dropped their clubs and were beating the tops of their heads with both hands, running for all they were worth and yelling, "Foreigners! Foreigners!"

A troop of soldiers emerged from the grove. Leading them were two tall men who had white hair all over their bodies and were carrying shiny sticks. These two are surely foreigners, I thought to myself. Foreigners know enough chemistry to manufacture things that look like metal. I felt a bit uneasy. Suppose Big Sye asked me to stop them, what would I do? How did I know what sort of weapon these shiny sticks were? Though sacking the grove hadn't been my idea, I was still Big Sye's bodyguard and if I should desert him I would lose my position. And for all I knew I might have to depend on him for everything as long as I was in Catland.

"Quickly, go stop them!" Big Sye said to me.

I took my pistol in hand and started out to meet them. To my surprise, as soon as the two saw me start toward them they stopped. Then Big Sye caught up with me and I knew there was no danger here. "Talk peace with them. Talk peace," Big Sye said in a low voice from behind my back. This confused me. Why wasn't he telling me to fight them? Talk peace? What was I to say?

The two white men spoke: "There'll be a fine of six bundles of poppi leaves--to be divided among the three of us."

I looked around. There were only two white ones. Why did they say three? Big Sye urged me from behind: "Bargain with them."

How was I to bargain? Feeling like an idiot, I said: "Six bundles--to be divided among the three of us."

When the two of them heard this they smiled and nodded, as though they were very well satisfied. I was more perplexed than ever, but Big Sye shouted an order and his soldiers brought over six bundles of poppi leaves. The two white cat men very politely asked me to select my two first. Then I understood, I was included in the "three". Naturally I asked them to pick theirs first. They took out four bundles at random and handed them over to their cat soldiers, then they said to me, "We too have just finished harvesting. See you again in the city." Like a simpleton, I replied, "See you in the city," and they turned and went back to the poppi grove.

I was completely fogged in. What kind of a farce was this?

Not until after I had arrived in the Cat City and talked with a few foreigners did I understand the ins and outs of the situation. Since the people of Catland could never defeat foreigners in a fight their only hope was to egg them into fighting among themselves, so they took advantage of every opportunity

to make trouble between one foreigner and another. The foreigners were aware of this and although they often had conflicts of interest, they would never attack each other and thus profit the Catlanders. They knew that if they fought each other both the victim and the victor would lose in the long run, but if they stuck together and cooperated in bilking Catland, none would suffer the slightest loss. Not only did their international policies operate this way but their nationals in Catland lived by these principles. Protecting poppi groves was the foreigners' profession, but all had agreed to protect the groves only from other Catlanders. Whenever landlords on both sides had foreign protectors, each landlord was to keep his own men away from the other's poppi. If a landlord violated this condition, the foreigners on both sides would decide together what his punishment should be. Thus the possibility that foreigners might fight foreigners, all to the profit of Catlanders, was avoided.

This was all very well for those who worked as protectors, but how about the cat man's point of view? Of course it was unfair to them, but still they suffered it voluntarily. They didn't exert themselves to fight the system; they hired foreigners to beat and kill people of their own country. Whose fault was this?

As we moved on toward the city Big Sye--knowing I had no use for poppi leaves--mentioned that if I wanted to sell my two bundles he would buy them back for thirty national souls. I knew very well they were worth at least three hundred souls, but I didn't say I would or wouldn't sell. Trying to show my contempt by ignoring him, I didn't utter a word.

As the sun dropped in the west the Cat City came in sight.

6

The city was bustling. There were people everywhere. The arrangement of the city was the simplest I had ever seen. There were no "streets" because except for row upon endless row of houses as far as the eye could see, everything else was "street." The city looked exactly like an army camp--one great open space covered by rows of low, colorless houses. Outside the houses cat people were as thick as ants. There was no knowing what they were all doing or where they were going. There wasn't a single one who walked straight along the street; not a single one who walked without getting in others' way. If anyone did know where he wanted to go he had no control over the direction of his movement. He would be carried first one direction then the other, like a piece of driftwood in the surf. Once a man left his house he went where the press of the crowd carried him; he could consider himself lucky if he got back home the same day.

I thought surely Big Sye would take his procession around this human sea, but instead he ploughed right through the middle of it. The soldiers used their clubs on the crowd, cracking cat heads right and left to open a passageway for Big Sye on his seven bearers and the rest of the column carrying the bundles of poppi.

We soon reached Big Sye's house, which was in the middle of the city. All that could be seen of the house was four plain, high walls, without door or windows. As the sun went down the people on the streets began to thin out, and I took my first close look at the houses all around. They were all plain, square structures with no windows and no doors. I wondered how people got into them.

Several heads appeared over the top of the wall of Big Sye's house and he shouted something to them. The heads disappeared then reappeared a moment later. Ropes were lowered and the people above began hauling up the bundles of poppi leaves. By the time half the bundles had been taken up it had become quite dark. There was no one left on the streets now and the soldiers who were working with the poppi bundles were getting very restless. I decided that for some reason the cat people didn't like to be out of doors after dark.

In his most polite manner Big Sye asked me, "Would you be willing to watch the remaining bundles of poppi through the night? It's already very late and the soldiers must go home."

I said I would. I wanted very much to see the inside of his house, but I thought that if it was anything like the hut in the poppi grove I would be much more comfortable spending the night under the open sky. Big Sye, pleased at my ready acquiescence, dismissed the soldiers, climbed a rope, and disappeared over the top of the wall.

I moved several bundles of poppi away from the stinking gutter that ran along the street and arranged them into a bed. Then I lay down and looked up at the stars, feeling quite comfortable. Just as I was about to drop off to sleep, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I sat up with a start; then I thought maybe I was only dreaming. I rubbed my eyes and started to lie down again. Then I saw two cat men standing in the darkness in front of me.

Though I hadn't had a close look at them I knew for certain that they were not ordinary cat men, for if they had been they would never have had the courage to tap me on the shoulder. Without thinking, I said, "Please sit down." This came out automatically, from force of habit. It was as if I had forgotten that I was on Mars and not at home in China.

With great dignity the two sat down, and immediately I began to feel good. As long as I had been in Catland, I had never before met anyone who treated me with any dignity.

"We are foreigners." The fatter of the two spoke. "You know why we mention that we are 'foreigners'?"

I knew what he meant.

"You too are a foreigner," said the thinner one. They didn't speak as if they had worked out ahead of time what they were going to say, but they seemed to have mutual respect for each other--so different from Big Sye's way of saying everything himself and giving no one else a chance to open his mouth.

"I'm from Earth," I said.

"Oh!" They were astonished. "We have long wanted to communicate with other planets but we've never been able to do it. How fortunate we are to meet a man from Earth!" They both stood up, as if to show their respect for me.

They sat down again and began asking me questions about life on Earth. I liked these two men. Their speech was simple and clear, without too many "polite" expressions, but at the same time showing respect for others. Their country--Brightland--was about seven days journey from here. Their occupation was the same as mine--protecting poppi groves for Catlanders.

After I had talked to them for a while about Brightland they said to me, "Mr. Earthman," (Addressing me this way showed that they paid me the fullest respect.) "We had two purposes in coming here. The first was to invite you to come and live with us. The other was to steal these poppi leaves."

This startled me.

"You explain the second purpose to Mr. Earthman," said the fat one to the thin one. "He doesn't seem to understand our intent."

"Mr. Earthman," began the thin one, smiling, "I'm afraid we startled you. Don't worry, we aren't going to use force; we came to talk it over with you. Big Sye's poppi leaves are entrusted to your hands, but if you protect them faithfully you won't get any special thanks from him; and if, on the other hand, you allow them to be stolen he isn't going to dislike you any more. The people of Catland, you must understand, have a unique way of doing things."

"You are all cat people," I said to myself.

He seemed to guess what was going through my mind. Again he smiled. "Right, the ancestors of

all of us were cats, just as..."

"My ancestors were apes." And I laughed too.

"Yes, we are all animals quite capable of entertaining evil ideas--our ancestors were not of the highest quality." They looked intently at me, apparently thinking that I did resemble an ape. Then they continued: "Back to Big Sye's affair--if you are faithful to him he won't thank you, but if you let us take half of this poppi he can then broadcast the fact that he has been robbed and raise the price of his remaining goods. When rich men are robbed it is always the poor who lose. Big Sye will never suffer."

"But that is Big Sye's affair. He has given me a charge and I cannot cheat him. His character is one thing; my conscience is another."

"Right, Mr. Earthman. When we are in our own country we look at matters this way too. However, here in Catland for us to be honest when all are deceitful hardly seems fair. To be frank with you, that such a country as this exists is a shame to the race of men on Mars. We actually don't consider the people of Catland human beings."

"That's all the more reason why I should be honest. Even if they are not men, I still am," I replied firmly.

The thin one took over: "You're right, Mr. Earthman. And we aren't going to insist that you act against your conscience. We just wanted to warn you--don't let yourself be cheated. We foreigners have to look out for this."

"Forgive me for asking," I said, "but is Catland so poor and weak because the foreign countries unite in exploiting her?"

"That is a point. However, on Mars lack of power is never reason for a country's international position to be lowered. Only when the people of a country lose their personal honesty, does that country gradually lose its national integrity, and no one wants anything to do with a country that has no integrity. We admit there are many ways in which other countries are not reasonable in their treatment of Catland, but then who wants to speak up in favor of a country without integrity and run the risk of injuring relations between themselves and respectable countries? There are many other weak countries on Mars which have not lost their international standing because of their weakness. There are many reasons why a country might not be powerful. Lack of natural resources, disasters of nature--either is sufficient to make a country weak. But lack of personal character is produced by the people themselves.

"Take Big Sye for example. You came from Earth and are his guest, not his slave. He could have asked you to come into his house and rest. He could have asked you if you would like something to eat. But he ordered you to guard the poppi! I'm not trying to explain why foreigners despise Cats. Now let's talk about our first purpose." The fat one took a breath and turned the speech over to the thin one.

"If you ask Big Sye tomorrow to let you live with him, it's certain that he will not grant your request. Why? You'll find out for yourself later. For the present we'll just talk about why we came. All the foreigners here live in a separate area to the west of this city. Only foreigners live there and they observe no international boundaries; it's like one big household. We have organized ourselves into a group this way because there is no hope of reforming the filthy habits of the natives of this place. Their food is practically the same as poison, their doctors are--argh! They don't have doctors! And there are many other reasons, but we needn't go into the details now. Our purpose in coming to you was only to protect you. You believe this, don't you, Mr. Earthman?"

I granted their sincerity and I thought that I could also guess some reasons they hadn't told me, but I felt that since I was here I ought first of all to see what the Cat City was like. Perhaps it would

have been more profitable to see some other countries first. From what these two men told me I could see that Brightland must certainly be more cultured than Catland. But it is not often one has the opportunity to witness the destruction of a culture. Not that I had the attitude of a spectator at a tragic play. I really had hope that I might be of some service to Catland. I won't say I had any love for Big Sye, but surely he couldn't be representative of all the people. I didn't doubt that what these two white men told me, but I still wanted to see for myself.

The two guessed what I was thinking. The fat one said, "We don't have to decide it now. Whenever you want to see us we will always welcome you. Go straight west from here--it's best to go at night and avoid the crowds--and when you get to the western border, keep going and you will soon see where we live. See you later, Mr. Earthman."

They didn't seem to be at all resentful, only sincere and considerate. I was grateful to them.

"Thank you!" I called after them. "I'll certainly come to see you. I just want to have a better look at the people here first."

"Be careful about eating their food! See you later!" They said together.

No, I couldn't go to the foreign settlement to live. The cat people could be improved. Just look how submissive they were. Soldiers beat on their heads as if they were drums, and still they laughed. And as soon as it grew dark they went to bed and there was not a sound in the city. Could a people such as this be hard to manage? If they but had good leaders they would certainly make a most peaceful and law-abiding citizenry.

I couldn't go to sleep because of visions of a reformed and beautified Cat City.





The next morning Big Sye came out and without a word of thanks to me took the remaining bundles of poppi inside.

I explained to him that I wanted to live here a while to see how the people of the city lived. He said I couldn't stay with him, and I ought to live with the rest of the foreigners. If it was inconvenient for me to live with him, might I just see what the inside of his house was like, I wanted to know. No, that would be impossible. When I pressed him for reasons he said finally, that it would damage my personal standing if I were to enter his house.

Just then an old cat head appeared at the top of the wall. The head was covered with white hair and the piglike snout was as wrinkled as a dried-up papaya. The old cat yelled down, "We don't want any foreigners! No foreigners here! No! No foreigners!" I thought this surely must be Big Sye's father.

As I stood wondering what to say next a youthful-looking cat man called me aside. (Big Sye took the opportunity to climb up the wall and disappear over the top.) A cat youth--here was the kind of a person I had been hoping to meet. The young man was Big Sye's son, so now I had seen three generations.

"Have you come from far away?" Young Sye asked me.

"Very far away. Tell me, is that old man up there your grandfather?"

"Yes. Grandfather believes all our misfortunes were brought by foreigners and therefore hates all foreigners."

A crowd began to collect around us, all standing with their mouths open and staring.

"Could we find a quiet place to talk?" I asked.

"Wherever we go they will follow us. We can talk right here. They aren't interested in what we say; they just want to see how you open your mouth and how you blink your eyes."

"All right." I liked Young Sye's frankness. I asked him to tell me about his family.

He began, "Grandfather doesn't understand anything at all about foreign countries, so he takes the traditions of our ancestors as a standard of conduct for the whole world. Father on the other hand, knows just a little about foreign matters. When he was young he imitated foreigners in everything and now he uses the knowledge he gained then as a tool for his own profit. Where new methods can be used to advantage he uses them. He's not obstinate like Grandfather. However, this is merely a change in immediate method; it's not a reform in principle. As far as principle is concerned, Father and Grandfather are exactly alike."

Still thinking of the possibilities for real reform, I looked Young Sye over carefully, wondering how strong a character he had.

"Do you also eat Poppi?" I don't know why I hit upon this as a measure of men.

"Yes," Young Sye replied.

"Why?" I was too impolite. "Please excuse my frankness."

"If I didn't eat poppi I couldn't live in a society such as this."

My hope that Young Sye might be useful to his country began to diminish, but I continued to question him. "Couldn't reforms be undertaken? How about individual effort?"

"There's no use thinking of such a thing. Individual effort from the stupid, pitiful, submissive, impoverished and yet contented people? The club-carrying soldiers who know nothing except stealing poppi and raping women? The intelligent, selfish, near-sighted, shameless, scheming politicians who care not a whit for society? Individual effort? Impossible!"

"Do all the youth think this way?" I asked.

"Youth? In Catland we don't have any 'youth.' Of course those who haven't lived long are 'young,' and we all grow older as the years pass, but we have no concept of 'youth' as a group. Some of our young people are older in spirit than my grandfather; others are already more crafty than my father. Age doesn't really mean anything."

I had many more questions I wanted to ask Young Sye, but I was tired and needed a rest. I asked him if he could find me a place to stay. He too tried to persuade me to live in the foreign settlement, but when he saw I was determined to stay here and see my fill of the city he said that he knew of a place.

"There is only one good thing about the place," he said. "They don't eat poppi."

"As long as I have a place to live I won't worry about conditions," I said. "Thank you for your trouble."

My landlady was the widow of an ambassador who had died many years earlier and there were two things in her life which set her off from the common run of Catlanders. She had been abroad and she didn't eat poppi.

But now I had no time to think about who the landlady was; I was intent on climbing her wall. I was proud as a kitten trying out his claws--now I could see what things were like inside one of these square houses. As I climbed, my heart began to pound. Dirt fell with each movement of my hands and feet and the wall wobbled so I was afraid I might get dizzy and fall. Finally I reached the top.

The house had no roof! What happens when it rains? I couldn't guess--and this made me even more determined to live here for a while. About five feet below the top of the wall there was a floor and in the middle of this floor was a big hole. The Ambassador's wife awaited me, her head sticking up through this hole.

Madam Ambassador had a big, broad face, set with very fierce eyes. A thick coating of white powder covered her face but could not hide the fine gray hairs that grew there. She looked like a whiskery old melon with eyes.

"Whatever luggage you have, just put it on the floor. The upper side is all yours. Don't come below. As soon as it's daylight we eat; as soon as it's dark we eat. Don't be late. We don't eat poppi! Bring the rent money." Madam was adept at foreign relations.

I paid the rent. I had in my pocket the five hundred national souls given me by Big Sye.

This was really convenient--my only luggage being myself, I had only to have a place to live and there was nothing else to fret about. As for my house--just a floor, four walls; none of the trouble even, of having to move tables and fiddle with chairs. As long as I didn't make a misstep and fall through the hole all was right with the world. The mud on the floor was at least two inches thick and the aroma coming from it was not at all suitable for an ambassador's house. The surface had dried and cracked and it stank. I thought I'd better go out for another walk. I understood now why the cat people spent all the daylight hours in the streets.

As I was about to leave, the Madam and eight melon-faced women came crawling out of the hole. These eight females crawled over the wall first, not one of them looking at me. Then finally, with her body outside the wall and her head at a level with it, Madam Ambassador issued a communiqué:

"We're going out. We'll see you this evening. There's no help for it. When the Ambassador died the responsibility all fell upon me. I have to look after these eight creatures for him. No money. No man. From dawn till dark I have to look after these eight vixen! But we don't eat poppi! My husband was an ambassador. I am the Ambassador's wife. I've been abroad. I don't eat poppi. From dawn to dark I have to look after eight female cats," and she promptly dropped out of sight.

Again I was completely at sea! What was this? Eight daughters? Eight younger sisters of the husband? Eight concubines? Aha! Eight concubines. This was probably the reason Big Sye would not let me go into his house.

Below the floor there was no air. One cat woman with a bunch of "female cats"--to use Madam Ambassador's official language--stench, disorder, obscenity, ugliness . . . It no longer seemed important whether I lived with a family like this! But I had already handed over my rent money; and also I would find a way to get below for a look around no matter how intolerable it might turn out to be.

Since they had all gone out, perhaps now would be a good time to go down. No, Madam had ordered me not to go below, and to pry in secret would be dishonorable. At my thought, her head popped up over the top of the wall again.

"Out you go, quickly! No stealing a look below. That wouldn't be honorable."

I climbed down at once. Where should I go? The only one I could talk to was Young Sye and he was too pessimistic for good company. Where should I look for him? Not at home, naturally, and to look for anyone on the street was probably as hopeless as feeling for a needle in the ocean. I squeezed out of the crowd sideways and looked at the streets around me. I saw clearly now: in the center of the

city were the residences of the upper classes and the government organs, for the buildings were much higher than those to the left and right. Further away from the center, houses were lower and poorer, surely poor people's homes and small shops. I recollected that this was what Big Sye considered the Cat City.

While I was thinking, ten or fifteen girls squeezed out of the crowd and came directly toward me. (As white-faced ones are certain to be women, I could distinguish them a long way off.) I felt a bit uneasy, for from the impression the Madam Ambassador and Big Sye had given me, I understood that the women of this place were certain to be extremely obedient, extremely honest, and very well controlled. Running around at will, as these girls were doing, surely could not be proper behavior. If I didn't want people to look down on me my first day here, I must be careful. I was just about to retreat.

"Time for observation has begun, eh?" Young Sye's voice.

I looked carefully. He was in the middle of this group of women. It was useless for me to run. In the wink of an eye Young Sye and I were surrounded.

"How about one?" asked Young Sye, laughing and glancing about. "This is Flower. This is Poppi --even more bewitching than poppi. This is Star . . ." He supplied me with the names of them all, but I don't remember the list.

Poppi walked toward me, winking as she came. I stepped back, not knowing what I ought to do. I couldn't figure out what this bevy of females was up to. If they were all bad ones I shouldn't be reckless about my reputation my first day here, but if they were good girls I couldn't offend them. To tell the truth, although I am not a woman hater, I've never had any special love for them: I always felt women's fondness for makeup was an indication of their addiction to falsity. Naturally I have met women who don't use makeup, but they don't seem to be any less capricious. However, this attitude does not lessen the due respect I hold for women. "Respectful but distant," is my attitude toward women, so I had no desire to offend this group of girls.

Young Sye saw my dilemma. He gave them a playful shove. "Be off! When two philosophers get together they don't want you around." All tittered and very tactfully disappeared into the crowd. I was still baffled.

"Men of old took concubines, modern men take wives," Young Sye began to explain, "I, detesting the old and hating the new, take neither wife nor concubine, but just play around as I please. If this is finagling, then finagling it shall be. Who does not finagle with women?"

"Those girls seem . . ." I didn't know how to say it.

"Them? They seem . . ." Young Sye took it up, "seem . . . like women. You can be overbearing with them, kind and loving to them, respectful toward them, infatuated with them, or you can support them; it's all according to a man's wishes. Women themselves will never change. My greatgrandmother used makeup, my grandmother used makeup, my mother uses makeup, my younger sister uses makeup, these girls' granddaughters will use makeup. Lock them in a room and they'll use makeup, put them on the street and they'll use makeup."

"Pessimism is here again," I said.

"This is not pessimism. This is exalting women, respecting women. It's only women who never change, who from beginning to end are always pure, always women. The face they have from heaven is not good enough, so it must be covered with white powder."

This joking tone made me reflect.

Young Sye continued smugly, "Those were all so-called 'modern' girls. They are the enemies of my father and the Ambassador's wife. It's not that they want to fight with my father, but he hates them

because he would not be able to make them poppi addicts if they were his daughters and would not be able to lock them in the house if they were his wives or concubines. Nor is this to say that they have more power or more ability than my mother or Madam Ambassador. They are merely more like women--more able to do nothing, more able not to think, but extremely talented at powdering their faces. They're all very lovable. I only finagle with them because I'm a person who doesn't love anything."

"They've all had a modern education?" I asked.

This question convulsed Young Sye so much he couldn't speak for some time.

"Education? Hoo! Education . . . education . . . education!" He seemed to have gone out of his head. "In Catland, except for the 'non' education of the schools, everything is education! Grandfather's cursing--education; father's selling poppi leaves--education; Madam Ambassador caring for eight living-dead female cats--education; the stinking gutters of the big streets--education; soldiers thumping people's heads--education; the more powder applied the thicker it'll be--women's education. Everything is education. When I hear the word 'education' I have to take ten poppi leaves or I vomit."

"Are there many schools here?"

"Many. You haven't yet been over to that side of the street to look?"

"No."

"You ought to have a look. That side of the street is nothing but cultural organizations." Young Sye laughed again. "Don't ask me whether there is any connection between cultural organizations and culture. The organizations are there." He suddenly looked up at the sky. "That's bad. It's going to rain."

There were no heavy clouds in the sky, but an east wind was blowing very cool.

"Hurry home while the sky is still clear!" Young Sye seemed to be very much afraid of rain.

Like the tide in a storm the mass of people rolled toward their houses, and I ran after them, though I knew very well that having returned home I would still get wet, since my room had no roof. It was interesting to watch the people climbing the walls like so many madmen. I had seen obstacle races before, but never had I seen a city's entire population climbing walls at once.

There came another gust of east wind and the sky suddenly darkened. A great red flash dragged the heavens to the earth and, with the rows of houses, united to form a big triangle. Following a peal of thunder, drops of rain the size of hens' eggs came beating down and a loud brushing sound could be heard in the distance. The raindrops became finer, the gray space at the horizon lightened, there was a gust of cool wind, and another great flash. The sound of single raindrops could no longer be heard--a solid sheet of rain poured down from the heavens. The sky, nothing, could be seen; only the increasing fierceness of flashing light. The stream of rain was suddenly split open from its peak; a frantic snake cut the black space open for a instant, shuddered twice, and disappeared. Everything was dark again. I arrived at the base of a wall completely soaked.

Which was the Ambassador's house? I retreated a few steps to look with the aid of a flash of lightening. It came, a great white-brightness, as if an enormous black demon in the sky had opened his eyes for a few flashing glances. No use. I still couldn't make it out. The devil with whose house it is! Climb up and then talk about it! Half way up I knew that this was indeed the Ambassador's house because the wall wobbled in a familiar way.

A big flash, a wait that seemed like several centuries, and then a peal of thunder like the collapse of the sky--the wall and I left the vertical and assumed the oblique. I closed my eyes; another roar of sound; where am I going!

The sound of thunder rolled away into the distance. Was I really hearing this, or was I dreaming? As I opened my eyes--no, I couldn't open my eyes--the wall of the Ambassador's house was plastered over my face. Yes, it was still thundering. I had come to. I tried to feel about, but both arms were held down by stones, and my feet and legs had disappeared--for all the world as though I'd been planted.

I finally worked my hands free and scraped my face clear. The Ambassador's house had become a great mound of mud. I pulled my legs free, calling frantically for help. I was all right, but Madam and her eight foxes were surely buried under the bottommost layer. A few raindrops were still flying around in the air, so no matter how I yelled, not a soul came. Cat people are afraid of water, and of course wouldn't come out before the sky was completely clear.

Pulling free the half of myself still buried, I began to dig at the heap of dirt like a mad dog, heedless of my wounds. The sky cleared, and cat people came out again. I clawed at the dirt and cried for help. Soon many people came and stood to one side watching. Thinking they hadn't understood me, I explained:

"It's not I who needs help. Save the nine women buried underneath!"

They had understood. They crowded forward but did nothing. I knew it was useless to depend on entreaty. I felt in my pockets for national souls.

"A soul to anyone who helps me dig." They were startled. No one believed me. I pulled out two souls for them to see, and they came on like a swarm of bees. But one picked up a stone and left, another took a brick and left. Then it got through to me: it was the practice of cat people never to miss a bargain. All right, suit yourselves. Whatever the motive, bricks and stones will be carried away and the people underneath will be saved. They moved very rapidly--like ants moving a pile of rice--one wouldn't have thought it could be done so quickly. A sound came from beneath and my mind was a bit easier. But it was the voice of only one person, Madam Ambassador and my heart sank again. Everything was cleared away and there sat the Madam in the center of the space. The other eight girls were sprawled in the corners and had already ceased all movement. I wanted to help Madam Ambassador up but as soon as my hand touched her arm she cried out:

"Ai-yo! Don't touch me! I am the Ambassador's wife! Steal my house, will you? I'll go see the Emperor! Behave now, and bring my bricks back!"

With light hands and whispering feet, people were still searching all over the ground. The bricks had all been taken away and now some were carrying dirt away by handfuls. The pressure of their economy made them feel that to carry away a handful of dirt from another's disaster was better than to go home empty-handed--thus I figured it.

The Ambassador's wife scraped the mud off her face. There were two wounds on her jaw and a big lump on her forehead. Her eyes were wide and staring, as if afire. She got up with an effort and lunged at one of the scavengers. I don't know how she so quickly and accurately got a biting hold on his ear. As she gnawed she snarled from the corner of her mouth like a cat mouthing a rat. The one who was being bitten screamed and lashed desperately at her belly. The two turned round and round for a long time, then the Ambassador's wife saw the girls lying on the ground. Her jaw dropped and the victim shot off like an arrow. The people standing around cried out and retreated to a distance of ten or fifteen feet. Madam Ambassador embraced one of the girls and began to wail.

My heart softened--so she wasn't completely inhuman. I wanted to go over and hearten her, but I was afraid she might repeat her feat and bite my ear. She seemed to be somewhat deranged.

After crying a long time, she spied me again.

"It's all because of you! You! You dragged my house down! You won't get away! Those who took my things won't get away either. I'll see the Emperor. You'll all be killed!"

"I'm not running away," I said slowly. "I'm helping you the best I can."

"You're a foreigner. I believe what you say. But those creatures! There's only one thing to do--ask the Emperor to send soldiers to search their homes. Wherever a brick is found a man must die! I am the Ambassador's wife!" She slobbered as she screamed, and finally spit out a mouthful of blood.

I didn't know whether she had that much influence or not. I tried to comfort her, fearing only that she'd gone mad. "First, these eight girls . . . ?" I asked.

"You again--what would you do with these eight foxes? I care only about the living; never mind the dead. Do you have a way to take care of them?"

This stopped my questions. Did I know what to do? I had yet to manage a funeral in Catland.

Madam Ambassador's eyes grew more and more terrifying. Clear water covered her eyeballs and they shone with the wild fire of madness, a porcelain-like, floating brightness.

"I'll tell you!" she cried, "I have no place to go to complain. No money, no husband. I don't eat poppi. Ambassador's wife. I'll tell you!"

"This one," she pinched the skin on the face of one of the dead girls, "this dead fox--when she was only ten years old she was gotten by the Ambassador. Ten years old! Her flesh and bones had not yet got their full growth, and she was used by the Ambassador! The first month she didn't want it to get dark. As soon as darkness came she--this little dead fox--she would cry out--call for father and mother--clutch my hand and wouldn't let go. She called me Mother--called me Ancestor--wouldn't let me leave her. But I'm a virtuous wife. I couldn't quarrel with the Ambassador over a ten-year-old slave girl. If the Ambassador wanted his pleasure, I couldn't interfere. I was his wife and I had to have a wifely attitude. This little fox--as soon as the Ambassador started toward her, she would scream to heaven and earth, yell with an inhuman sound. When the Ambassador was taking his pleasure--oh, how she screamed. "Dear Madam Ambassador! Good Ancestor! come, save me!" When the thing was done, she would lie motionless. Pretending to be dead? Really in a faint? I didn't know; nor did I investigate much. I gave her medicine, gave her food--this dead thing--and she thanked me not at all for my kindness! Later, when she had grown up--oh, what an ingrate--she was only sorry that she couldn't swallow the Ambassador whole. And when the Ambassador bought another one, this one cried from dawn to dark, blaming me because the Ambassador bought women. I was the Ambassador's wife--a virtuous and proper wife--but this little fox blamed me for not controlling the Ambassador. Worthless, stinking vixen!"

She shoved that dead cat's head to one side and took hold of another.

"This creature was a prostitute. From dawn to dark she ate poppi--and she seduced the Ambassador into eating it. If an ambassador gets addicted to poppi, how can he go abroad? Look at the trouble she caused! What could I do? I couldn't keep the Ambassador from playing with prostitutes, nor could I see him eat poppi and be unable to go abroad. My difficulties--you can't imagine how great are the difficulties of being an Ambassador's wife. In the daytime I had to watch she didn't steal poppi; when evening came I had to prevent her starting quarrels between the Ambassador and myself. Beast! Every minute of every hour she tried to run off. I had to keep my eyes on her all the time. If an ambassador's concubine should run away, where would everybody's face be?"

Madam's eyes looked as if they were actually on fire. She took up the head of another dead girl:

"This thing--she was the most horrible! A modern fox! Before she came in the door she was

telling the Ambassador to drive us all out. She wanted to be the Ambassador's wife. . . Ha! Can you imagine such gall! She wanted the Ambassador just because he was the Ambassador. The other vixen were bought with money; this thing came to him of her own will. He didn't spend the first cent. He had her for nothing. She disgraced womankind--all of us! As soon as she arrived the Ambassador quit talking to the rest of us. When he went out she had to go along; when he entertained guests she had to be with him. It was as if she were his wife. What could I do? An ambassador should have women, but the Ambassador's wife--there could be only one--myself! I had to discipline her. I tied her on the top of the house and let the rain wet her. Little fox! Then she demanded the Ambassador let her go home--said he had deceived her. Could I let her go--let a cheap whore force the Ambassador into separation? Who ever heard of such a thing! Marry her off to someone else? It wasn't as easy as all that. Being the wife of the Ambassador is not an easy thing. Day and night I watched her. Fortunately, the Ambassador then brought this thing in."

She turned around and picked out another dead girl from the ground. "The 'modern' one figured she was close to me--thought she'd cooperate with me and together we'd oppose this new fox. Women are all alike. When their hold slips on a man they get panicky. When the Ambassador would sleep with this new fox, the other one would cry all night. Then I had something to say: 'You still want to be Madam Ambassador, eh? Why you can't part from him! Look at me, the real wife! If you want to be the Ambassador's wife, don't think you can have him all to yourself. An ambassador is no pedlar who embraces only one woman all his life!'"

Her eyeballs were now completely red. She took hold of another dead cat head and beat it on the ground several times. She let out a laugh, glared at me, and I involuntarily retreated a few steps.

"When the Ambassador was living they didn't give me a minute's peace. Watch this one, look out for that one, curse this one, beat that one--all day long. They spent all the Ambassador's money and sucked him dry. Then he died--without leaving even one male child. Not that there were none born. All eight of them had boy babies, but not one lived. How could they live? When one vixen whelped, there were seven plotting to destroy it. Their only fear was that the one who had a male child would become the Ambassador's wife. I, the real wife, was not jealous like the others. I just didn't care. Who killed whose child was their affair; it was no concern of mine. I didn't kill their children, nor did I bother about their murdering each other's babies. A wife must have a wifely attitude.

"The Ambassador died. No money, no man, eight foxes on my hands. Could I let them run off and marry some one? I could not. From dawn till dark I watched them. From dawn till dark I tried to pound responsibilities into their heads. Did they understand? Not likely! But I didn't give up. Day and night I took care of them. What could I hope for? There was nothing to hope for--only, perhaps, that the Emperor would notice my trials, my great purpose, my character, and reward me--bestow on me one of those big tablets engraved with the words 'Continent Action.' But--but--didn't you hear me crying before? Did you hear me?"

I nodded.

"What was I crying about? Crying for this bunch of dead foxes? Ha! That I should have time to cry for them! No, I was crying over my fate. Wife of the Ambassador--I never ate poppi. Now my house has fallen down and all my 'continent acts' are completely obliterated. If I go now to see the Emperor, what can I say? Suppose the Emperor sits on the throne and asks me: 'Madam Ambassador, what have you done that you ask for reward and commendation?' What will I say? Can I say that in the dead Ambassador's place I have cared for his eight women--done nothing ugly--not sneaked away? The Emperor will ask, 'Where are they?' Then shall I tell him they have all died? Where is the proof that I deserve a reward? What will I say? Ambassador's wife . . ." Her head rested on her breast. I wanted to go to her but I was afraid she would revile me.

She lifted her head again. Her eyes had already stopped moving. "Wife of the Ambassador--been abroad--don't eat poppi--reward--big plaque--wife of the Ambassador . . ."

Her head lowered again, her body toppled slowly to one side, and she lay between two of the women.

I was terribly disturbed. Madam Ambassador's story of sorrow made tears flow for the women of many centuries. My hand lay on history's blackest page and my eyes couldn't look down at it.

I should have gone to the foreign city to live. Again I had become a homeless ghost. Where could I go? That bunch of cat people who had helped were still looking at me. They were no doubt waiting to get more money. They had carried off the Ambassador's wife's property, yes, but that didn't make them discard the hope of getting a soul. My head ached terribly--two teeth had been knocked loose. I was gradually losing my ability to think, becoming ill. My mind sounded a warning. The money that was in my pockets--whether there was ten dollars apiece or five dollars apiece I would throw it all on the ground and let them divide it among themselves--or fight over it. I didn't have the energy to deal with this. There was no hope for the eight women, and the Ambassador's wife was finished--blood flowed out from under her body, forming a big pool. Her eyes were open, as if even in death she was still watching her eight vixen. I had no way to bury them and I knew that the people standing round about would not bother about it. Depression and disappointment made me want to dash my head to pieces.

I sat on the ground for a while. Though I was extremely loathe to move, I knew I must get up. I couldn't see these women rot before my eyes. I walked away, limping and staggering, no doubt causing foreigners in general more than a little loss of prestige. The streets were again crowded with people. I saw a group of young ones carrying pieces of chalk and going from house to house writing on the walls. The walls were still very wet and after the writing was done and had been dried by the slight breeze it turned extraordinarily white. "Cleanliness Movement." "Wash the Whole City." On the wall of every house was written a phrase such as this. In spite of my headache, I burst out laughing. After it has rained, propose that the whole city be washed. No need to waste any energy. Yes, the cat people really knew how to do things. The stinking gutters were cleaned by the rainwater. Cleanliness movement. Ha, Ha! No doubt I had gone a bit crazy too. It was all I could do to keep from pulling out my pistol and shooting some of those creatures who were writing white characters.

I still remembered Young Sye's words: "On that side of the street are the cultural organizations." I wandered over--not in order to see the cultural organizations but in hopes of finding a clean place to rest awhile. I had always thought that the houses on the two sides of a street ought to be face to face; but the houses along these streets were precisely back to back. This novel method of alignment made me forget my headache. Only the cat people, with their dislike for fresh air and sunlight, would be able to hit upon this happy idea, the back of one house leaning against the back of another, without the least open air between. It was not so much a street as a breeding ground for disease. My headache returned. Being ill in a foreign country makes a man extremely pessimistic. I had lost all hope of ever returning to China alive.

Unable to observe anything more carefully, I found some cool shade and fell to the ground.

I didn't know how long I had slept. When I opened my eyes I was in an extremely clean room. I thought I must be dreaming--or I had developed such a fever that I was having hallucinations. I felt my head but it was not hot. I was puzzled, but my body was still so tired that I closed my eyes again. I heard the sound of a very light step and opened my eyes the least bit. It was Poppi, 'even more bewitching than poppi.' She came over, felt my head, and nodded hers just a little. "Good!" she said to herself.

Not daring to open my eyes again, I waited for the situation to explain itself. After a short while I heard Young Sye and stopped worrying.

"How goes it?" I heard him ask in a low voice.

Without waiting for Poppi to answer, I opened my eyes.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

I sat up. "This is your house?" I asked, not trying to hide my puzzlement.

"Ours," he said, pointing at Poppi. "At first I thought of letting you come here to live, but I was afraid my father wouldn't like it. You are Father's man, you know--at least he thinks you are. He didn't want me to be friendly with you. He says I've already learned too many foreign ways."

"Thank you." Again I glanced toward the center of the room.

"You're wondering why we're so clean here? This is what Father calls foreign ways." Young Sye and Poppi both laughed.

"Is this your home?" I asked.

"This is one of the cultural organizations. We two live here. People who have power can take over the buildings of the cultural organizations whenever they want to. As long as we keep the place clean we can face the organization without shame. Other people don't ask whether or not private individuals ought to take over a public place and we don't go into it very deeply either. Finagle--again we have to use this most interesting word. Poppi, give him some more poppi to eat."

"Have I already eaten some?" I asked.

"If we hadn't given you some poppi juice a while ago, do you think you would have awakened? You see, poppi is truly a great medicine. Here it is the queen of all the medicines. If it can't cure a disease there is nothing to do but wait for death. It has just one flaw--it can save the life of an individual but can kill a country. Such a little shortcoming!" Young Sye was playing the philosopher again.

I ate some more poppi and was greatly revived, though I still felt very lazy. I saw the wisdom of Brightlanders and other foreigners who lived in an area set apart from the Cat City. This culture of Catland is dangerous. Once you get close to it, it holds you fast, like glue, and you can't move unless you go its way. If you want to go into Catland, then be sure you would become a cat man; otherwise, stay completely clear of it. With all my strength I had tried to keep from eating poppi--and the result? I was eating it. If you're here you'll eat it; you can avoid it only by staying clear of the place. Filth, corruption, disease, confusion, and darkness were the marks of this culture. Although some elements of Catland's civilization might carry a little light, still such tiny gleams of light could never hold out against the powers of its darkness. I could see that some day, either by some real light or by its own poison, this civilization was bound to be exterminated--just as one would kill off so many germs. However, the cat people did not see it this way at all. Young Sye probably saw this far, but because he saw that the game was already lost he gave it up and laughed at his own defeat. Big Sye and the others just went on dreaming.

There were many, many questions I wanted to ask Young Sye. Politics, education, the military, finances, production, society, home and family . . .

"I don't understand politics." Young Sye said. "Father is a specialist in politics. Go ask him. As for the others, some things I know, some I don't. You'd better first go see for yourself, then come and ask me. Only concerning things cultural can I give you comprehensive help. Father has some connection with all branches of the government, and since he can't take care of everything I act as his representative in dealing with cultural organizations. If you want to see the schools, the museums, the libraries, just say so and I'll see that you're satisfied."

This made me very happy. I could go ask Big Sye about political matters and I could ask Young Sye about cultural affairs. Having access to these two, I could get a pretty good idea of what things in Catland were like.

Young Sye asked me what I wanted to see first. I was mortified because I was totally disinclined to move.

"Tell me a little about your own life," I said, hoping that from his words I would be able to see something of the affairs of Big Sye's house.

Young Sye laughed. Every time I heard that laugh I admired and hated him. He knew he was better than the other cat people and he would not lift a finger to help them for fear of dirtying his hands. He seemed to feel that it was a great misfortune to have been born in Catland--a single rose among the thorns. I didn't like this attitude.

"My parents brought me into the world," Young Sye began, as Poppi sat beside him watching his eyes, "but I had nothing to do with that. They loved me greatly, and I was not responsible for that either. Grandfather also loved me greatly--all grandfathers love their grandsons--again, nothing new or strange. About my life as a child there doesn't seem to be anything to tell."

He tilted back his head and thought. Poppi still looked up at him. "Yes, there is one little matter that is worth your hearing, even though it's not worth my telling: My wet-nurse was a prostitute. I had a prostitute for a wet-nurse and I was not allowed to play with other children. This was our family's special brand of education. Why get a prostitute to take care of the children? Because we had money and could afford it. We have a saying, 'Money can buy the devil himself.' Grandfather believed that it was only proper to have prostitutes to take care of the boy children and soldiers to look after the girls--they could best teach the boys and girls the facts of life. Being well acquainted with the facts of life, they could marry early, have children early, and thus would not be ashamed before their ancestors.

"As for my schooling, there were five teachers who taught me my lessons--five dry sticks taught me all of Catland's learning. Later one of these sticks suddenly turned out not so wooden--he ran away with my wet-nurse. The other four were then thrown out.

"I grew up and Father sent me abroad. Father had an idea any one who could speak a few sentences of a foreign language could understand anything--and one should have a son who understood everything. After living abroad for four years I was sure I did understand everything, and I returned home. But to Father's consternation I really didn't understand--I had just increased my foreign flavor. However, he didn't love me the less because of this; he still gave me my allowance. As for myself, I was happy to have money to spend, from dawn till dark to make merry with Star, Flower and Poppi.

"Ostensibly I am Father's representative, managing cultural affairs, but actually I'm just a parasite. Evil I don't consider worth doing and good I'm not capable of doing. Finagle--the more this precious word is handled the glossier it becomes." He laughed again and Poppi joined him.

"Poppi is my friend." Again Young Sye guessed my thoughts. "My friend in cohabitation. This is another foreign influence. At home I have a wife--married her when I was twelve years old. By six, my prostitute wet-nurse had taught me a thing or two, and by the time I had reached the age of twelve and was married I was positively talented. My wife also could do everything--especially bear children--the best of women, to hear Father tell it. But I wanted Poppi. Father told me to take her as a concubine, but I didn't want that. Father has twelve concubines, so taking concubines is the only proper thing.

"Father hates Poppi poisonously, but he doesn't hate me too much. He considers foreign influences baleful but he's reached the point where he recognizes that there is bound to be this sort of influence in the world, and he can deal with it by simply calling it 'foreign influence.' Grandfather hates Poppi and me because he doesn't even recognize foreign influence. My living with Poppi wouldn't amount to much except that it has a great influence on Catland's youth. Cats, you know, believe that the only possible relationship between men and women is that of copulation. We call it 'that.' Take a wife--'that.' Take concubines--'that.' Play with prostitutes--'that.' Nowadays insisting on free choice is also just 'that.'

"However that may be, I set the example for young people. Everybody first marries and afterwards takes up free choice just as I've done. But the old people hate me to the bone because if you take a wife and concubines everybody lives in one place and the only relationship possible is 'that.'

Playing 'that,' there are a bunch of children born and the whole thing remains very simple. But when a man forms a free love alliance, since he can't discard his wife he must have a separate place for his mistress; otherwise the demands of the foreign customs are not really satisfied. Doing things this way, the amount of money that has to be spent is extraordinarily great. Naturally the parents can't afford it and when they don't supply the money the young ones quarrel with them. Poppi and I have fixed things indeed!"

"Couldn't you break completely with the old family?" I asked.

"Oh, that won't do. No money! Free love is a foreign custom, but we won't give up our own country's excellent custom of getting money from our elders."

"Can't the older generation think of a solution?"

"What can they do? They insist that 'that' is what women were made for. They themselves take concubines and don't oppose young people doing it, so how can they prohibit free love? Nobody has a solution. Whether it's wives, concubines or love mates it all results in children. The old ones take concubines for all they are worth, the young ones chase freedom for all they are worth, and on the surface they all have a great time; but it always involves 'that' and the result of 'that' is more little cats--with no one to look after them, no one to raise them and no one to educate them. Here's the biggest finagle of all. My grandfather finagled, my father finagled, I finagle, and these young people finagle. 'Responsibility' is a most bothersome word for us cats!"

"How do the women feel about it? You don't mean they willingly admit that they're good only for 'that'?" I asked.

"Poppi? You're a woman, you tell us."

"Me? I love you, there's nothing else to tell. If you want to go home and see that prolific wife, go ahead. I don't care. But when you stop loving me, I'll eat forty poppi leaves at once and that will be the end of Poppi!"

I waited for her to continue, but she said no more.

11

The next day I began my inspection. As I had no idea what I ought to see first, I thought I would just look at whatever I happened to run in to when I went out.

I was pleased to see that all the cat children I saw were on the near side of the street, where the cultural organizations were. Evidently they were on their way to school.

The kittens were the happiest little people in the world. Dirty--extraordinarily dirty, indescribably dirty--skinny, stinking, ugly, with maimed noses and deformed eyes, heads and faces completely covered with sores--but all of them were extraordinarily happy. I saw one whose face was puffed up like a pot-bellied jug, with his mouth swollen shut and bloody marks on his cheeks. But he was still laughing and he was still running and jumping with the other children. The faint hope I had for the cat people fluttered and died. I could not think of this swollen child and good homes and schools at the same time. Only when the homes, schools, society, and the country were in complete confusion could these swollen, ugly, maimed, yet happy children be raised. They were an index to the society and country, a shrieking indictment of the adults. When they grew up what could they make the country but dirty, straitened, stinking, and ugly. Again I saw the thumb of extermination pressing on the hopes of this nation of cat people. There was no hope! Wives and concubines--caring only for "that"--nobody willing to think of his race--free love. Love! Under the thumb of extermination, to talk of love? Death would be too good for them.

But I was jumping to conclusions. First I should get a better look. I followed a group of children until we came to a school--a big door and four walls enclosing an empty plot of ground. The children all went in while I watched from outside the door. Some immediately rolled themselves into a lump on the ground, some climbed up the walls, some drew pictures on the walls, others were in the corners carefully inspecting each other's secrets. All of them were very happy. But there was no teacher. I waited and waited and finally three adults came in. They looked like sample items from a skeleton sale--as if they'd not eaten a full meal since they were born. They came scraping along slowly, holding up the walls with their hands. At each little puff of wind they stopped still for a long time.

They scraped slowly in the door of the school, but the children continued to lump, climb, play and look at secrets. The three sat on the ground panting for breath. The children became even more noisy, so the three samples closed their eyes and stopped up their ears, seemingly afraid only of offending the students. After what seemed like hours, the three arose together and tried to get the children seated, but the little cats had apparently made up their minds never to quiet down. Fortunately the three teachers--they must have been teachers--caught sight of me.

"There's a foreigner outside the door!"

Just this sentence, and the children immediately sat down facing the wall, not one daring to turn his head. The skeleton in the middle seemed to be the headmaster, for he spoke: "First we shall sing the national anthem." But no one sang; they all just stared. Then the headmaster said, "Next we shall salute the Emperor." Again only stares. "Pray to the great spirits." This time the students seemed to have forgotten the foreigner. They began to play "you shove me, and I'll shove you," and to call each other names. "There's the foreigner!" Again they all got quiet. "The Headmaster will now instruct."

The headmaster took a step forward and said to the back of their heads: "Today is the day when all of you graduate from college. What a glorious occasion it is!"

I almost fainted. This bunch of . . . graduating from college? Steady, let's not get excited too soon. Listen carefully.

The headmaster continued: "How glorious is your graduation from this highest of schools! Having graduated from here, you understand everything, all knowledge is yours. In the years to come the, ah . . . the great affairs of the country will all descend upon your shoulders. What a glorious, ah . . . thing this is!" The headmaster yawned long and noisily. "That's all!"

The two unoccupied teachers applauded for all they were worth. The children started playing again.

"Foreigner . . . !" Silence. "The teachers will instruct."





The two teachers humbly deferred to each other for a long time. Finally the one with a face as thin and drawn as a dried dwarf-melon took a step forward. I saw that this teacher was a pessimist; there was a great teardrop in the corner of each eye.

Very lugubriously he began: "What a glorious affair is today's graduation from this highest of schools!" One of the tears detached itself. "All our country's schools are schools of the highest level. What a glorious thing!" Another tear fell. "Please do not forget the kindness of your schoolmaster and the teachers. It is a glorious thing that we can be your teachers, but yesterday my wife died of starvation. What a . . . " His tears fell like raindrops. He struggled for a long time before he was able to continue. "Don't forget the goodness of your teachers. Those of you who have money, help with a little money. Those who have poppi, help us with poppi. You know that it has been twenty-five years since we were paid. You . . . " He couldn't say any more. He crooked his body so that it sat on the ground again.

"The diplomas will be given out." The headmaster took some thin stone tablets from the base of the wall. There were words engraved on the tablets but I didn't get a good look at them. The head-

master put the stone tablets in front of his feet and said, "At this graduation everybody is first. How . . . ah . . . glorious! Now I have put the diplomas here. You can come and take them as you like. Since everyone is first, naturally there is no need to receive them in order. Dismissed."

The headmaster and the one teacher helped to his feet the sad one who was sitting awry on the ground and they walked slowly out. The students didn't even bother to pick up the diplomas but went on as before--wall climbers climbing walls, ground rollers rolling into lumps, etc.

What kind of a farce was this? I was terribly muddled. I would have to ask Young Sye about it.

Diagonally across from the school I had just visited there was another where the students were all about fifteen or sixteen years old. There were seven or eight cats on the ground, holding another down and cutting with something. To one side more students had just caught two others. Probably practice in dissection, I thought. However, trussing up fellow cats for vivisection did seem pretty cruel. I steeled myself and watched, thinking that the true nature of things would be revealed in time. Shortly, the second group had its two tied up and thrown down at the base of a wall. The two victims didn't let out a sound, having doubtless died of fright. Those doing the dissecting swore as they cut.

"We'll see who's the boss--throw away that arm. Tell us to study will you. No fornication during working hours, eh? Things this bad all over and you tell us to study! No 'that' in school! Cut your heart out, you bastard!" There was a flash of fresh red flesh . . .

"Have you got those two bastards tied up good? Bring one here."

"The headmaster or the history teacher?"

"Headmaster!"

My heart almost jumped out of my mouth! They were dissecting the headmaster and teachers!

Maybe the headmaster and the teachers had long deserved to be shot, but I could not watch students slaughter living people. No matter who was right and who was wrong, I couldn't watch students--or anyone else--commit murder. I pulled out my pistol. Actually, if I had just yelled they would all have run away. But I'd lost my temper. This bunch of things could be dealt with only with a gun.

With the blast of my first shot the wall on three sides fell down. Of course! After a big rain the walls could not stand a shock--I'd made another mistake. Thinking to save the headmaster, I'd buried him and the students under the debris of his school. What was I to do now?

Fortunately the walls were just made of loose dirt. (I had a totally unworthy thought at this point --doubtless the headmaster was asking for his own demise, for from the looks of the school, he had sold all the solid parts of it for his own profit, using loose dirt to fill in the enclosing walls. A headmaster making private use of public funds deserves to be killed.) While I was making these conjectures my hands and feet were not idle. Pulling and hauling, I soon had most of them out. Everytime I pulled one of the mud-sprites out, without so much as a glance at me he would run off like a crazed homing pigeon. None seemed seriously injured, and I felt better. Furthermore, this farce began to interest me. Finally I unearthed the headmaster and the teacher. Their hands and feet were bound so they couldn't run. Dragging them aside, I scuffed around with my feet to see if there was anyone left in the pile. I went back to unbind my last two mud-sprites.

I waited a long time before the two opened their eyes. Not having any emergency medicine or pacifying and reviving liquors at hand, I could only watch them. Although I was anxious to ask them about many things, I didn't have the heart to prod them immediately. The two teachers sat up slowly, their eyes still glazed with terror. I smiled at them, and asked in a gentle voice, "Which is the headmaster?"

Both their faces screwed up with fear and they simultaneously stabbed at each other with their

index fingers.

Their minds are disordered, I thought.

The two teachers--stealthily, slowly, lightly--stood up. I didn't move, thinking they wanted to loosen up their bodies. They stood up, nodded to each other, and then, as fast as a pair of dragonflies flash by your eyes, they had disappeared far down the street. There was no use chasing them; in a footrace with cat men I could have no hope of victory. I heaved a sigh and sat on the pile of dirt.

What a state of affairs--suspicion, contempt, cunning. Who was the headmaster? They pointed to each other. Just saved from death, each instantly prepared to sacrifice the other to save himself. I burst into mad laughter, though not at those two; I was laughing at their society. Everywhere suspicion, contempt, selfishness, cruelty. No glimmer of honesty, liberality, integrity, generosity. Students were dissecting the headmaster; the headmaster unwilling to admit he was the headmaster--darkness, darkness, total darkness. Was it surprising they couldn't understand I'd saved their lives? I thought of the Ambassador's wife and her eight little foxes, still lying there rotting.

Headmaster, teachers, Ambassador's wife, eight little foxes--what price life? I sat down and wept.

I had to talk to Young Sye.

12

The following was written down just as Young Sye told it:

"Catland is an ancient civilization. When the other countries of Mars were still uncivilized Catland had already developed an education system. Nonetheless, our present education system is a plagiary of foreign countries. This is not at all to say that we should not imitate others, merely that to follow the example of others is not an easy thing. To emulate one another is proper--it's an important source of strength for cultural progress of the race. But notice that no country took up our old system; rather, we had to imitate another's new system. (Here you can see who is high and who is low.) However, if we had even been able to imitate successfully, so that our education would progress equally with that of other countries, this alone would have demonstrated that we had some ability. The new educational system has been used now for more than two hundred years, and it is still a complete mess--proving that we are not even able to imitate. What we ourselves had originally created we couldn't make work; what's worse, we can't even imitate others successfully. Being a pessimist, I can only conclude that we are a people of very low ability.

"You ask how those children can be graduating from college? You are too honest--or rather, too callow. Don't you see that it's a farce? Graduating? That was the first day in school for those children. When you want to produce a farce make it good. We have nothing else to be proud of--but we can produce a perfectly constructed farce. The past two hundred years' history of education is the history of a farce. Now our farce history has reached the final page. No matter how bright we may be, we can't add a single twist to the gag now.

"When the new education was first put into operation, our schools were divided into many levels, and students were required to pass examinations at successive levels before graduating. After two hundred years of progress and improvement, examinations were gradually dispensed with, and every student was sure of graduating, whether he attended class or not. But naturally elementary school graduation did not sound so exalted as college graduation, and who would willingly claim only an elementary school graduation? Students stayed away from classes with equal zeal in both elementary school and college, so we made the ultimate reform. The first day they enter school they graduate from college. After that . . . what after could there be? They've already graduated!

"For Catland this method is the best. Statistically, in number of college graduates we are first among all the countries of Mars. To be first in anything is a comfort to us. It's something to be proud of. We cats put the most emphasis on reality, you see--something we can tick off on our fingers: the number of college graduates of no other country can equal ours. Knowing that, everybody smiles with satisfaction. The Emperor likes the system because when the country is turning out so many college graduates, he can face the people with pride. The teachers like the system because each one of them is a college professor and every school is equally top level. Every student is valedictorian, wonderful! Parents like the system--to have brilliant offspring is the glory of a father and mother. We needn't mention the student. If he is fortunate enough to be born in Catland and manages to live till the age seven, he is assured of facing life equipped with the credentials of a college graduate.

"Economically the system is even more wonderful. When the schools were first put into operation, the Emperor had to furnish money every year for education, and what was worse, the very students whom he had helped educate often opposed or made trouble for the Emperor. This was clearly spending money to buy trouble. Now, however, the Emperor doesn't spend a penny, and yet each year yields a bumper crop of college graduates who can get along quite well with the Emperor. Of course we lose a number of teachers to starvation, but the important thing is that the number of college graduates has increased.

"At first, when teachers actually earned money, they were contentious--always fighting among themselves, and even inciting the students to riot. Every day or so several had to be executed. Now that problem's been solved. The Emperor doesn't supply any funds, so what have they to bicker about? If they demand their salary, the Emperor ignores them. If they make trouble for the Emperor, he sends soldiers to beat their heads in. Their succor used to be their students, but now as soon as students enter, they graduate. Since there is no one to help them make trouble, they can only wait for starvation and death. To starve to death is an honorable thing--the Emperor is delighted to have teachers starve to death."

"Why do people still want to be headmasters and teachers?" I asked.

"This is explained by the gradual evolution of the past two hundred years. You see, in the beginning there was variety in the courses of study, and men produced by the various courses were different. Some studied engineering, some business, some agriculture. But after they graduated, what were they to do? Those in engineering had learned a few foreign skills but no engineering firms existed. Those in business had learned foreign methods but we had opportunities only for individual pedlars. As soon as a large-scale commercial establishment was opened, it was confiscated by the military. Those in agriculture had studied foreign agriculture, but we raised only poppi, nothing else. Education and our society were completely out of joint. What could students do after they graduated? There were only two careers: to be a bureaucrat or a teacher. And no matter what your education was, you must have connections in order to become an official. 'With a friend at court it's one step to heaven,' we say. But how many had the necessary connections?

"If you can't be an official, the next best thing is to teach. In any case, those who had modern education were not willing to be laborers or pedlars. Little by little society was divided into two types: those who had graduated from school and those who had not. The former were determined to be bureaucrats or teachers and the latter were laborers and pedlars. I won't discuss the effect this had on government, but our schools have developed a 'revolving education'. I study, graduate, and teach your children. Your children graduate to teach mine, and the profession gets handed on forever.

"But character was set back a step each time, for the number of graduates was constantly increasing, and except for a few who could become officials, all wanted to teach. Where are there that many schools? Sometimes competition for a teaching position brought on a year or two of civil war--people killed, blood shed--it seemed as if everyone were risking his life for the education profession, but actually it was all over a miserable little salary.

"Gradually the money for education was taken--by the Emperor, politicians, military men--so faculties began a movement to stop teaching unless they received their pay. The students had seen through

the teachers and had got into the habit of not going to class. Thus began the 'graduation without exertion' movement. As this movement did away with all educational expenses, the Emperor, the politicians, the military, the parents--all approved of it. In any case education was a useless thing, and teachers were just playthings who could not be respected. Still the schools could not be closed for fear foreigners would laugh at us. Thus the movement to graduate from college on first entering school was a total success. Schools were kept open as before and the number of college graduates increased daily, but not a national soul was spent. The revolving education became universal education--which is to say no education at all. At last, the perfect farce!

"When the movement had succeeded, however, the headmasters' and teachers' zeal over education did not diminish. They remained locked in fierce combat. You see, the schools were once really what schools should be--completely equipped with tables, chairs and property. At that time the faculty made plenty of money from the students' tuition and fees. But when they could no longer collect this money, they began to sell the public property. There was brisk competition for headmaster positions. Those whose schools had little movable property looked for schools with more. Those with none looked for schools with a little. Again they fought till blood flew. The Emperor was always a sympathetic person and since he had stopped the education appropriations, he couldn't in good conscience forbid the selling of school property. Thus one by one the schools became auction yards--so that now they have all become just four walls surrounding an empty plot of ground.

"Why are there still people who want to be headmasters and teachers? When they don't work they are idle; when they work they are still idle; why not work? Furthermore, it is of some use to have the title of headmaster or teacher. From a student, to rise to become a teacher, from a teacher to headmaster--this is the established road in the revolving education and although headmasters and teachers don't get paid, they can sometimes use this position as a stepping stone for rising to the bureaucracy. There may be no education in our schools, but there are students, teachers and headmasters, and every school is a top level school. When the students hear that their own school is the highest their minds are numbed and all is peaceful.

"Since there is no education in the schools, what can the people do who really want to study? Go back to the old system--engage a tutor to teach the children at home. Naturally, only the people who are well-off can do this. Most children have to go to the schools to lose their education.

"With the defeat of education went the last shadow of hope for Catland. The first trial of the new education polluted the period of new learning. The new system and the new learning had to be brought together from abroad. The learning was called new, and it seemed to be constantly moving forward, always searching for new and different principles--until it came here to us, where it immediately grew white hairs, like things mildewing in rainy weather.

"Borrowing someone else's educational system is like cutting a piece of flesh off another person's body to repair your own! Everyone thinks it's enough just to cut a piece of flesh off another's body, and heeds only the piece of fresh flesh, disregarding what makes it grow. Having taken a mass of new learning, but not knowing the spirit of investigation and research, it was not possible to put the strength of it into our revolving education. We defiled the new education, but at this period people nourished a sort of hope. Although they knew it was wrong to think a fresh piece of flesh cut from another's body could prolong life, still they cherished their little superstition--if they could just get a little bit of the new leaning--no matter how little--they would immediately prosper just like a foreigner. This vain hope and their pride can be excused. But now people know that in the schools there is nothing but competition among the headmasters, fights among the teachers, and general riotousness. So they cook this fact in the same pot with the new learning and curse the whole stew. New learning does not strengthen the country, rather it destroys people, they think.

"Thus from the stage of pollution of the new learning to the stage of cursing the new learning. Now that teachers are engaged to teach the children at home--this wholly separated from the new learning--our original old stone books have increased in price ten times. My grandfather was overjoyed, thinking that this was the victory of our national heritage over foreign learning. My father was happy--he sent his sons abroad to study. He thought that this way only his sons would understand everything,

and in the future they could help him make use of the new learning to take advantage of those people who believed in the stone books. Father is clever and capable. He always held that the new learning from abroad could be useful. But it was sufficient to have just a few people learn it. If we just have a few people learn the foreign tricks we can become strong. But most people were in sympathy with Grandfather: the new learning is a kind of black magic. It can only make people muddled and dizzy--make sons beat their fathers, daughters curse their mothers, students kill their teachers; there is nothing at all good about it. This stage of cursing the new learning is not far from the period of the death of the country.

"You ask where is the reason for the downfall of this new learning. I cannot answer. I only feel that it was because there was no character. When the new learning first arrived, why did people want it? Because everybody wanted to get a little richer, not because they wanted their students to have greater understanding; because they wanted to produce more material goods, not because they hoped to know a little more truth. Their attitude destroyed the concept of developing morality and the spirit of inquiry, so that when schools were established they had men but had no character. The teachers were there to make money, the headmasters were there to make money, the students were there preparing to make money. Everyone saw the school as a new kind of delicatessen no one thought to ask whether it was education. The nation was debilitated, society was in darkness, the Emperor had no character, the politicians had no character, the people had no character. The lack of character in the schools was added to the lack of character outside the schools, they were washed together, and they faded into one another.

"Naturally, in this impoverished country there were many people who could not even get enough rice to eat. This makes it very hard to talk about character, for character is largely destroyed by the press of economics. However, this does not excuse the educators. Why do we want education? To save the country. How can the country be saved? Through promotion of learning and development of character. In education this should be the motivating factor. When one wants to be a headmaster or a teacher, one should sacrifice personal profit. Perhaps I put too much emphasis on hopes for the educators. People are human. A teacher feels hunger just the same as a prostitute does. Perhaps I shouldn't pick on the teachers so much--nor do I intend to be unjust to them. But there are women who will go hungry rather than become prostitutes. Why can't a teacher grit his teeth and be a man of character? Of course, the government loves to deal ill treatment to honest people. The more honest an educator is, the more he will be mistreated. But no matter how bad a government is, it must pay a little attention to the will of the people. If we who administer education really had character, and the students produced had character, could society be forever blind to good and bad? If society looked upon educators as compassionate fathers, and all the students produced could accomplish something in society, would the government think lightly of education? Would it not provide money for operating expenses? I believe that if there were ten years of education with character Catland would undergo a change. But we have already had two hundred years of new learning--and look at the result!

"If we were under the old system we could develop a people who would be honest, would love their parents, and would adhere to the proprieties. How is it that the new learning hasn't even any mediocre accomplishments? Everyone says--especially those in charge of the schools--that society is in darkness. Whose responsibility is it then to bring light to society? The educators loathe the darkness, but they forget that their character is the light of the stars in a black night. What other hope is left? I realize I'm biased and too idealistic, but shouldn't all educators be a bit idealistic? And I realize that the government gives them no help at all, but who wants help from men as bad as those in the government?

"You saw that teacher being slaughtered. That's nothing astonishing. It's the natural result of characterless education. When the teacher has no character, the students will have no character. And they do not simply lack character; they are actually pushed back several thousand years, returning to the cannibalism of ancient times. Advancement of mankind is extremely slow, but regression is very fast. With the loss of character, men immediately revert to barbarism. We have been operating schools for two hundred years. Every day during this two hundred year period headmasters and teachers have fought with each other and students have fought among themselves and with the headmasters and teachers. Fighting turns men into beasts. To strike one blow is to take a step toward barbarism.

So nowadays it is not unusual for students to kill a few headmasters and teachers now and then. Nor should you feel that the headmasters and teachers are being treated unfairly. Ours is revolving education. One day the students will be headmasters and teachers, and others will come to kill them. Society is not affected by having a few more or less of this kind of teachers. No one even inquires into who kills whom in the schools.

"In a dark society such as this it seems that as soon as men are born they start sniffing and crawling to the east and to the west like hungry little wild animals hoping to find something to eat. Even something the size of a grain of sand is enough to make them struggle with all their might for possession. When children of this sort go to school and meet those teachers, it's like a flock of hungry little animals running into a herd of ravenous old beasts. They must use their teeth and claws and try out each other's strength. The slightest little desire arouses the wildness that has come down from the first man, and they will fight to the death over a book or over one poppi leaf.

"The desire to create a disturbance is in the blood of youth and this is excusable, but our disturbances here have another aspect. Whenever there is something to riot about, houses are torn down and things are destroyed, and afterwards everyone carries home bricks and pieces of the wreckage. The students feel satisfied, and the parents are also happy. Since it always brings home a few free bricks and a timber, you can say that a riot is never gotten up in vain. Headmasters and teachers take the opportunity to steal things; students take the opportunity to destroy. When the destruction is over there is something to carry home. The headmasters and teachers deserve to die and the students deserve to die. Students killing headmasters and teachers is a luminous display of divine justice. When the students have become headmasters and teachers and are killed in their turn, that too will be the natural course of justice. This is our education. When education can make men turn into wild beasts, you can't say it has accomplished nothing. Ha, ha!"

13

As Young Sye was a pessimist, I could discount his words somewhat. However, with my own eyes I had seen students graduating the same day they entered school and I had seen the butchering of headmasters and teachers. No matter how suspicious I was of what Young Sye said, I had no grounds to dispute him. I could only investigate the matter from another angle.

"Then does Catland have no scholars?" I asked.

"We have many," he continued, and I saw that he wanted to make jokes again. "There are many scholars, and this is an indication of the excellence of the culture. But looking at it from another side, it is also an expression of the decadence of the culture. It depends on how you define scholar. Nor can I give you a definition, but if you want to have a look at our scholars I can tell some of them to come here."

"You mean ask them to come? Why be so arrogant?" I scolded him.

"Tell them to come! Ask them and they won't come. You don't know the temperament of our scholars. Poppi, go tell a few scholars to come here. Say I'll give them some poppi. Tell Star and Flower to help you. Separate and look for them."

Poppi went out giggling.

I could hardly wait to see the scholars. Young Sye brought in a few poppi leaves and the two of us chewed them slowly. There was a mischievous grin on his face.

Poppi, Star, Flower and several other girls returned. They sat in a circle and looked intently at me, apparently wanting to speak but not daring to.

"Hey!" Young Sye laughed toward me. "They want to question you!"

They all started tittering. Poppi spoke first: "We want to ask you a few things. All right?"

"All right. But I don't know much about women's affairs." I imitated Young Sye's smile and manner of speech.

"Tell us what your women are like." They all spoke at the same time.

I knew that I could give a very interesting reply. "Our women put powder on their faces." Everyone: "Oh."

"Their hair is done up most handsomely. Some long, some short, some braided, some combed to the back; all perfumed." Their mouths hung wide open. They looked at the short hair on each other's heads, then all together they closed their mouths. They looked as if they had lost their last friend.

"They hang pendants on their ears--pearls or other precious stones--and when they walk these gems swing back and forth." My audience fingered the little ears on the tops of their heads. Flower seemed to be trying to pull her ears down lower.

"They wear beautiful clothes--which always leave a little flesh uncovered. Partly covered, partly exposed--even better to look at than the way you go about completely bare." I was purposely teasing them. "When the body is bare, there is only the beauty of the flesh and that gets monotonous, but if you wear pretty clothes, you add brilliance and color. So, although our women are not opposed to naked bodies, even in the hottest days of summer they wear something. And they wear shoes that are made of leather or satin and have high heels. The toe is sometimes set with pearls and the heel is embroidered with flowers. Pretty, eh?" I waited for them to answer. There was not a sound. Their mouths had all become big O's.

"In olden times our women bound their feet and kept them this small." I measured with my thumb and forefinger. "Now they have stopped binding their feet and changed to . . ."

Without waiting for me to finish the sentence, they all spoke out together: "Stopped binding them? Why stop binding them? Stupid! Feet that small--how pretty! Such small feet--with little pearls on the toe--how pretty!"

They were really moved. I thought I'd better comfort them. "Not so fast, wait for me to finish. They didn't really stop binding their feet; they just put on high-heeled shoes. The toe is here." I pointed to the tip of my nose. "The heel is here." And I pointed to the top of my head. "Makes a person five inches taller. Very pretty. Moreover, it bends the bones of the foot all out of shape. Sometimes you even have to lean on a wall to walk. Better; if you break one off you'll be higher on one side than the other and you'll topple right over."

They were satisfied. But the more satisfied they were with the earth's women, the more disappointed they were with themselves. Slowly they all hid their feet under their legs.

I waited for them to ask me more questions . . . hmm, they seemed to have been thrown into a trance by the thought of high-heeled shoes.

"How high did you say the heels are?"

"There are flowers on the shoes, right?"

"When you walk, they go tap, tap, tap?"

"How are the bones of the feet bent? Do they naturally bend when you put the shoes on or do you bend them first, then put the shoes on?"

"Made of leather? Will human skin do?"

"Embroidered with flowers? What flowers? What color?"

I saw that if I were a tanner or a cobbler I could have made a fortune for myself.

I was just about to tell them our women not only contrive to wear high heels but could do other things as well, when the scholars arrived.

"Poppi," Young Sye said, "go fix some poppi juice." Then to the girls, "You go some place else and talk high heeled shoes."

Eight scholars came in. As they came in the door they bowed to Young Sye, then sat down on the floor. They all lifted their faces and looked upward, not deigning to cast a glance in my direction.

Poppi brought the poppi juice and everyone took a long, slow drink of it. Then they closed their eyes--disregarding me even more if that were possible.

They wouldn't look at me--fine, I should look them over the more. All eight scholars were extremely thin, extremely dirty. Even the little ears on top of their heads were covered with two caps of dirt. Spittle had collected in the corners of their mouths. Their movements were very slow--many times more cautious and studied than Young Sye's movements.

The power of the poppi seemed to reach to the roots of their life. They all opened their eyes again and looked upward. Suddenly one spoke:

"Am I not the first among Catland's scholars?" He looked all around, stealing a little glance at me.

The other seven were brought to life by this little speech. Some scratched their heads; some gritted their teeth; some stuck their fingers in their mouths. Then they all replied together:

"You the first? You and your father--no, you, your father and your grandfather--you're all bastards!"

I was sure this would bring on a fight. But no, the "number one" scholar laughed. No doubt he was used to being cursed.

"My grandfather, my father and myself--three generations of astronomers; astronomers, you blockheads! Foreigners! They have to have a lot of instruments and mirrors to study astronomy, but the art handed down to me from generation to generation employs only the naked eye. How's that for ability! We're very particular about the relationship between the stars and the bad and good fortune in men's lives. Show me a foreigner who understands that! Last night as I was looking at the skies, the star of culture was directly over my head. The country has no scholars besides myself!"

"If I stood beneath the star of culture, it would be above my head." said Young Sye, laughing.

The Astronomer said nothing.

"Your Excellency speaks the truth!" chorused the other seven.

Then there was a long silence.

"Speak!" Young Sye gave an order.

One spoke: "Am I not the first among the scholars of Catland?" He looked all around. "Can astronomy be considered learning? Anybody knows that it cannot! To study one must first know words.

Philology is the only learning. I have studied philology for thirty years. Thirty years--who won't admit that I'm the number one scholar? Who?"

"Your mother's!" they all said together.

Perhaps philologists are not as even-tempered as astronomers. This one sank his claws into a scholar and shrieked: "Who are you to talk! First pay me what you owe me. Did you or didn't you borrow a poppi leaf from me the other day? Pay me back. Pay me back right now. I'll twist your head right off! I'm the greatest scholar in the land!"

"I, borrow a poppi leaf from you? Just remember that I'm a world-famous scholar! Borrow a poppi leaf from you? Let me go--you're getting my arm dirty!"

"Eat someone else's poppi leaves and then not pay . . . All right. Just wait. You wait till I write a philological article. I'll eliminate your surname. As the foremost scholar of the nation, I'll prove to the world that your name is not found among the ancient characters, just wait!"

This frightened the one who wouldn't pay. He begged Young Sye: "Excellency, Excellency! Lend me a poppi leaf so I can pay him back. Your Excellency knows I'm the number one scholar of the country, but scholars are poor people. Maybe I did borrow a leaf from him, though I don't remember it very well. And Excellency, there is another thing I must beg of you. Please ask His Excellency, your father, to give the scholars more poppi. If other people have no poppi, it doesn't matter, but we scholars--especially myself, the number one scholar--if we have no poppi, how can we attend to our learning? Look, Excellency, in my researches I have lately discovered that one of the punishments of ancient times was playing alive. Before long I'll have finished an article--and I'm going to give it to His Excellency your father, requesting him to present it to the Emperor, so that this interesting, historically-based punishment may be reinstituted. Having discovered this, am I or am I not the number one scholar? Philology--what is it? Nothing! Only history is real learning!"

"And isn't history written in words? Repay me the poppi leaf!" The philologist was obstinate.

Young Sye told Poppi to bring a poppi leaf and give it to the historian. The historian gave half of it to the philologist. "Here, but you don't deserve it!"

The philologist took the half a leaf and, gritting his teeth, said, "Short me half a leaf! You wait. It'll be damned strange if I don't have your wife!"

On hearing "wife" all the scholars began to get excited. All together they said to Young Sye: "Excellency, Excellency; why is it that we scholars can have only one wife apiece--it's so bad that we even think of seducing the wives of others. We are scholars, Excellency. We work for the glory of the whole country. The learning that has been handed down from the ancestors we preserve for sons and grandsons of ten thousand generations. Why shouldn't each of us have at least three wives?"

Young Sye said nothing. The astronomer spoke. "In the heavens a great star is always accompanied by several small stars. The ways of the heavens are thus, the ways of men should be the same. As number one scholar, I certify that a man should have several wives. Anyway, my wife's not a very good piece . . ."

Each scholar in turn certified--as the number one scholar--that men should have several wives. And they all adduced proof which need not be repeated. I can only say that women in the eyes of these scholars were so many mattresses.

Young Sye didn't say a word.

"Is His Excellency tired? We . . . we . . . we . . ."

"Poppi, give them some more poppi and throw them out," said Young Sye with his eyes closed.

"Thank you, Excellency, for excusing us," they all recited together.

Poppi brought the leaves, and in great confusion, giving Young Sye salutes of thanks and cursing each other, they all went out.

As soon as they had left, a group of young scholars came in. They had waited outside for fear of running into the old scholars. Every time new and old scholars meet a minimum of two lives is lost.

The young scholars looked much better. They were neither skinny nor dirty, and they were very lively. Before they sat down they greeted first Poppi and then me. I felt better--thought maybe there was still some hope for Catland.

Young Sye whispered to me, "These are the scholars who have been abroad for a few years and know everything."

Again Poppi brought poppi, and everyone chewed in good spirits. My mind was at ease again.

After eating the poppi, they were loquacious. But what were they talking about? I couldn't understand a word! In my association with Young Sye I had learned a lot of new words, but I could understand nothing these scholars were saying. I heard only sounds: gu-lu-ba-ji, dee-doong-dee-doong, hua-lovsky. What kind of a game was this?

I was very much annoyed because I had been anxious to listen to them. They talked on and on to me, but I couldn't make the slightest reply. I sat like an idiot child, nodding my head with a fatuous smile.

Then one of them spoke in cat language: "What is the foreign gentleman wearing on his legs?"

"Trousers," I answered, confused by this sudden lucidity.

"What are they made of?" another asked.

"How are they made?"

"What academic degree does wearing trousers indicate?" asked a third.

"Is your country divided into classes of trousered and non-trouserred?"

How should I answer? Better adjust my idiotic smile again.

When they got no reply from me they seemed very disappointed. They came over and felt my worn-out trousers.

When they had finished looking at the trousers, they returned to their gu-lu-ba-ji, dee-doong-dee-dong, hualovsky, leaving me extremely depressed.

Finally they left, and I asked Young Sye what they had said.

"You're asking me?" Young Sye said, laughing. "Who can I ask? They didn't say anything at all."

"Hualovsky--I remember that word." I said.

"Hualovsky? There was also toong-toong-ovsky. Didn't you hear that one? And much more. They just string foreign words together and gabble. They themselves don't know what they're saying any more than we do. They just listen to the noise they make. Anyone who can talk this way is a modern scholar. I know the word 'hualovsky' has been the rage for the past few days. Parents beat their children, the Emperor eats poppi, a scholar commits suicide--they're all hualovsky. Actually this term

means 'chemical action.' When you see them again, if you will take care to talk nonsense--hualovsky, toong-toong-ovsky, everybodyovsky--they'll know you're a scholar. You need only nouns; never mind the verbs. And for descriptive words, you just add a 'dee' to the end of 'ovsky'."

"And why were they looking at my pants?" I asked.

"Poppi's friends asked about high heeled shoes; the young scholars asked about trousers--all for the same purpose. The young scholars have some feminine characteristics. They are fastidious and like to be fashionable. The old scholars are particular only about the shortest route between women's legs. The young scholars try to pretty themselves up to attract the girls. You wait--in a few days if the young geniuses haven't all put on pants I'll be surprised."

The air in the room had become unbearable. I ignored Young Sye and went outside. Outside, Flower and a group of girls were supporting themselves against the wall, with bricks under their heels, practicing walking on tiptoe.

14

There was one saving virtue about this pessimist: at least he thought a thing over before being pessimistic about it. Perhaps his thinking was not very thorough and his temperament was weak, but he knew how to use his brain. This thought made me like Young Sye a little better. As for the two groups of scholars, I placed more hope in the modern ones. Maybe they were just as muddled as the old ones, but at least their manner was cheerful and lively. In this respect I thought they could make up for Young Sye's shortcomings. If he could take heart and be as cheerful as they were, thought I, he could certainly work out projects useful to society and country. He needed a few cheerful people to be his helpers. I wanted very much to see more of those scholars, to see whether or not they would be any help to Young Sye.

The girls told me where the young scholars lived. On the way to see them I passed by several schools, but I had no desire to visit any more of them. Furthermore, I didn't want to have to believe completely what Young Sye had said--though these schools too were just four walls surrounding a plot of bare ground. When I looked at the boy and girl students going back and forth on the streets, tears came to my eyes. Their manner--especially those a little older--was exactly the same as Big Sye's when he was being carried about by seven cat men--very proud and self-satisfied, each one considered himself a living immortal. There was not a trace of realization that their country was the most degraded country in the world.

The educators must really be addled to spawn such ignorant students. Perhaps I ought to pardon the young people, but when people are twenty years old and understand nothing, and in such a hell as this can still be so smug and insolent, I really can't feel any sympathy for them. I resisted the impulse to collar and question them, for I didn't have the time.

Among the modern scholars I wanted to see was a curator of the museum. I thought that by visiting him I would see the museum. The building housing the museum was not small--perhaps twenty or thirty rooms in length. Outside the door was a gatekeeper, his cat head leaning against the wall, deep in sweet sleep. I peeked in. There was not the shadow of another person. The doors of the museum might as well be wide open; nobody was looking after it. Strange--for the cat people love to steal things. Not venturing to arouse the doorkeeper, I walked in alone.

When I had gone through two rooms I ran into my new friend. He was clean, cheerful, and very well-mannered. I found myself liking him completely. His name was Maolovsky, which I knew for certain was not a common name in Catland; it must be a foreign word. I was afraid he would snare me with a string of "ovsky" words, so I started right off by telling him I wanted to see the museum treasures and asked him to guide me. I thought surely he couldn't "ovsky" the things in the museum, and as long as he didn't ovsky I could get by.

"Please, please, this way, please." Maolovsky was fairly oozing politeness.

We entered an empty room and he began to speak like a museum guide: "This is the room where the stone implements of ten thousand years ago are kept--arranged according to the most modern method. Please observe."

I looked all around--and saw nothing at all. "More black magic!" I thought to myself.

Without waiting for me to ask any questions, he pointed to the wall and said, "This is a stone jar of ten thousand years ago. Notice the words engraved on it. It's worth three million national souls."

Oh, I saw it. There was really a line of words engraved on the wall. The jar worth three million national souls was apparently embedded in the wall.

"This stone ax is ten thousand and one years old, worth two hundred thousand souls. This is a ten thousand and two year old set of stone dishes, worth one million five hundred thousand. This is . . . worth three hundred thousand. This is . . . four hundred thousand.

No need to go through the whole list. I respected his ability to memorize price tags.

We went into another empty room. Just as polite and as attentive as before, he said, "This is the room where the books of fifteen thousand years ago are kept--oldest books in the world--cataloged according to the most modern system."

He recited a list of book names and prices. Except for little black insects on the wall, I didn't see a thing.

When we had seen ten empty rooms I became impatient for Maolovsky to finish up. But just as I was about to thank him and excuse myself to go outside and get some fresh air, he led me to another room, outside of which stood some twenty men holding clubs in their hands. Certainly there was something inside. Thank heaven I'd not left already. With ten empty rooms and one real one, the trip would not be all wasted.

"You've come at just the right time. If you were two days later you'd not have seen these things," Maolovsky said, all politeness. "This is pottery from twelve thousand years ago--arranged according to the most modern methods. Twelve thousand years ago our pottery was the most elegant and refined in the world. Later--about eight hundred years ago--the pottery industry stopped. And today nobody knows how to make it."

"Why?" I asked.

"Ya-ya-ovsky."

What did that mean, ya-ya-ovsky? Without waiting for me to ask, he continued. "This pottery is the most valuable thing in the world. It has just been sold to a foreign country for three hundred billion national souls. Nor is that a high price for it. If the government hadn't been so anxious to sell it, they probably could have gotten at least five hundred billion. If they continue selling things at a loss this way, we curators will soon be unable to eat," said he, pettishly, "We haven't been paid for years, and if we didn't get a kickback from selling a few ancient artifacts, we'd drink the wind for our daily fare. Naturally the kickback from selling old treasures is a considerable sum, but all the museum curators are new style scholars. Our cost of living is many times greater than the old scholars'. The things we use all come from abroad. A single item we buy costs what an old scholar spends in a week. It's really a problem." Maolovsky's always-cheerful face took on a look of sadness.

Why had the ceramics industry stopped? Ya-ya-ovsky! Sell the ancient artifacts? Scholars get a kickback. I fought to hold on to the speck of hope I had had for the young scholars. I felt like embracing those ancient treasures and having a good cry. No need for further questioning. The government

uses the sale of museum property as its prime source of finance; the modern scholars care only about their kickback--and reciting price tags on the artifacts sold. What is there to ask about this? However, I put one more question:

"When all these things are sold out and there is no more kickback, then what?"

"Ya-ya-ovsky."

I understood. Ya-ya-ovsky was a thousand times greater finagle than Young Sye's "finagle." I hated Maolovsky, and his damned ya-ya-ovsky. I resisted the impulse to knock out a couple of his teeth. Why should a Chinese lose his temper over a cat man's affairs? I saw it clearly, though. The new scholars of Catland had been abroad and seen or heard a little about the newest methods of display. They understood nothing of what was good and what was bad. Such a very regrettable thing as the discontinuance of pottery making merited only a ya-ya-ovsky. Such a heartbreaking thing as putting the museum contents up for sale, still just a ya-ya-ovsky. They were boneless, lacking power of judgment, and without character. They had taken a turn abroad and come back calling themselves scholars so that they could live comfortably and ya-ya-ovsky.

Without taking leave of Maolovsky, I fled. When I got to the street I had calmed down a bit. In a society like this, selling ancient art to foreign countries might be good fortune for the art. To steal and destroy are things the cat people best understand. To destroy the treasures of the past is certainly worse than shipping them abroad to be preserved.

However, it's still impossible to pardon Maolovsky. Of course selling the ancient art was not his idea, but that pup's unblushing attitude was inexcusable. He seemed to be innocent of shame. Historical arrogance, as I see it, is mankind's most ineradicable trait. Nonetheless, the youth of Catland were able, without a trace of feeling, to throw away their own historical treasures. Moreover, Maolovsky was a scholar. If the scholars were like this, what must the illiterates be like? My hope for a revival of Catland had rotted out to the last trace of its roots.

I hadn't the heart to look for other modern scholars, nor did I want any more cultural institutions. Each person I met decreased my hopes for the "ideal cat." Each cultural institution I saw made me weep a few more tears. Young Sye was right not taking me to see these places and not explaining them to me beforehand. He told me to go see for myself, and this was much more meaningful than words could have been.

I passed by a library, but I didn't want to go inside, it would be another empty building. A crowd of students came out--had they been reading books!? My desire to see was aroused again.

The structure of the library wasn't bad; my mind worked now in relatives. Although it looked old and in need of repair, it had not actually started to fall down. When I entered the main door I saw several apparently freshly-written words on the wall. "Library Revolution." Who was the library revolting against? Not being very bright, I couldn't guess the answer right away. I walked on in a few steps, looking at the words on the wall. Suddenly somebody grabbed my legs. "Save me!" yelled a man who was on the floor.

There were about ten people lying on the floor and I saw the one who had hold of my leg was a modern scholar. Their hands and feet were all bound. I freed them, and they scuttled away like fish turned back to the water, covering an extraordinary distance in no time. Only the modern scholar remained.

"What's this?" I asked.

"Another revolution. This time it's a library revolution!" he said, so frightened he could hardly speak.

"What's the library revolting against?"

"People have revolted against the library. Sir, please look." He pointed to his legs.

Oh, he had put on a pair of short trousers. But what did trousers have to do with the library revolution?

"Aren't you wearing trousers, sir? We modern scholars consider it our duty to introduce foreign learning, morality, and customs, so we too started to wear trousers," he said. "This is the stuff of revolution."

"The stuff of revolution you don't make pants out of," I said to myself.

"I donned trousers. Unfortunately, the college students next door saw this revolutionary conduct of mine and called me over to tell me that I must give each of them a pair of trousers. I'm the head librarian. In the past I sold books, made a little money and gave some to the students, because the students have a lot of faith in everybodyovskyism. I have to sell books, for if I don't I can't make a living. When I sell the books, I have to give some money to them, because believers in everybodyovskyism have few qualms about killing people. But everyone has the "ovsky" habit, and today when they saw me wearing trousers they wanted to ovsky. I hadn't the money to have trousers made for all of them, so they started a revolution. My wearing pants is quite a revolutionary matter, so they revolted against me because they could not wear pants. And they tied us all up and ran away with my savings."

"They didn't steal any books?" I'd ceased to care much about personal losses. I was only interested in the library.

"Oh, they couldn't steal anything. The last of the books were sold fifteen years ago. Now we are just putting things in order."

"If there are no books, what are you putting in order?"

"Putting the rooms in order. Preparing for a revolution. Changing the library into a hotel. The name of it will still be The Book House, but we'll be making money renting rooms. Soldiers have already been billeted here many times, and it will surely be more proper for civilians to live here than for soldiers."

As I still had a few grains of respect for the cat people, I listened no further. I was afraid my microscopic respect would change into bad language.

15

During the night there was another heavy rain. Rain on Mars seldom stirred me to poetry. The sound of walls falling and houses collapsing echoed throughout the city. Destruction of this city is an easy matter after all, I thought. Just a few more days of heavy rain would do the trick. I don't think I entertained this thought with relish, but I found myself wondering just what the cat people were living for. Indeed, how were they living? At a loss for an answer, I could only think that in their history there were some great, incoherent errors and the people of the present were being punished for the transgressions of their past--but I suppose this was just empty speculation.

Unable to get to sleep anyhow, I thought I'd just as well amuse myself with nightmares. "Everybodyovsky"--again I thought of this word. Like so many other foreign words, this one had no meaning. Yet there seemed to be many students who believe in it. From the history of every country on the earth I knew very well that students are eternally the yeast of political thought. It's the students whose sensibilities are the most acute. But it's also the students whose enthusiasm is the shallowest. If the acuteness of their feelings is limited to receiving a few novel phrases--if the cat students are really like this--then I could only close my eyes to the future of Catland. I know it's unfair simply to rebuke the students, but because I had hopes for them I could not help rebuking them. I must have a look at politics.

I couldn't sleep all night long because I was anxious to get up and look for Young Sye. Although he had said that he didn't understand politics, he could certainly tell me a few facts of history. Without these facts I had no way to understand present conditions because my days here had been too few. I got up early in order to catch him before he went out.

"Tell me, what is everybodyovskyism?" I asked.

"It's a kind of political system in which everybody lives for everybody," Young Sye said as he ate a poppi leaf. "Under this system everyone works, everyone is happy, everyone is safe. Society is a great machine and every member of the society is a working part of this machine--happy, safe, hard-working little bolts and gears. Really not bad!"

"Are there countries on Mars that have put this kind of system into effect?"

"Lots! Some have had it more than two hundred years."

"Your country?"

Young Sye showed the whites of his eyes and my heart skipped a beat. There was a long pause. Then he said, "We have aped, but mark you, we've never 'put into effect' any system."

"Why 'aped'?"

"Suppose you have a child who is a pest, and you hit him a few licks. When I hear of it, I strike my child also--not because he's a pest, but because when you hit a child I have to strike one too. This is called aping family affairs, and it's the same in politics."

"You mean that rather than think out for yourselves how to handle your affairs you simply follow other people?" I asked. "For example, you never build your own houses but always live in rented houses?"

"That's right. Or, as you should have said: originally there was no need to wear trousers, but after seeing someone else wearing them we must wear them too. And we don't make them ourselves to the measurements of our own legs; rather we go out and buy a pair of used trousers."

"Tell me a few facts about the past," I said. "If they were only instances of aping, that's all right, too. Even aping leads to a few changes, doesn't it?"

"But change is not necessarily improvement and progress!"

I waited for him to continue. He thought for a long time. "Where should I begin? Altogether there are more than twenty countries on Mars; each country has its political characteristics and each has its reforms. If some one of us happens to hear that such and such a country's political characteristic is so and so, we all ape that characteristic. And if we suddenly hear that there has been a political reform in such and such a country, again everyone rushes to ape the reform. As a result, other countries' characteristics remain their own, other countries' reforms are real reforms--and we are still ourselves. The only thing that might be called a special characteristic of our country is that the more we ape the more disordered we are."

"But tell me a few facts. There's no system in this." I pleaded with him.

"All right. First let's talk about the 'brawl'."

"The brawl? What's that?"

"Like trousers, it's something we haven't always had. I don't know whether or not you have this sort of thing on Earth. It's a kind of political organization, in which many people get together to sup-

port a certain political position and policy."

"Yes, we have. Our term is 'political party'."

"Good. 'Political party' or whatever--in any case, when it came to us it was called 'brawl'." This is the way it came about: Since ancient times we had always had an Emperor who took care of the needs of the country. The people were not permitted to speak. Then suddenly news came from abroad that the people too could handle government affairs; whereupon everyone wanted to get into the act. When we heard that many people could form a political group, we looked through the ancient books but could not find a suitable term for such an organization. Only 'brawl' seemed to have a little meaning. So we began to have brawls. Since the brawls began, the changes in politics--if we can consider the brawl a political instrument--have been many. I can't explain in detail; I can only tell you a few facts, and these only very roughly."

"Speak then. A rough explanation is fine." I was only afraid he would not go on.

"The first political reform began with the demand that the Emperor grant suffrage to the people. Naturally the Emperor was not willing to do this, so the men in the brawls brought a lot of military men into the movement. When the Emperor saw this, he went into a frenzy. Then he decided he'd better make officials of the brawl leaders. When the brawl men became officials naturally they wanted to do nothing but be officials; they completely forgot about brawl affairs."

"Then someone hears that the Emperor could be dispensed with completely, and people began to form a new brawl, feeling that life could not go on unless the Emperor was driven out. This new one was called the People's Brawl. The Emperor saw that he must seek a settlement and that the only way to fight the brawls was with a brawl of his own. Therefore he himself organized a brawl, in which each member received a thousand national souls a month from the Emperor's purse. As soon as the men in the People's Brawl heard this their eyes got red with rage and they went to the Emperor to register a complaint. In order to keep the peace, the Emperor agreed to give them one hundred souls per month. Other people soon caught on that here was a new way of getting money, and before long there were more brawls than you could count."

"May I ask a question?" I broke in. "Were any of the members of these brawls really from the masses?"

"I was just about to tell you--how could common people get into them? They had no education, no knowledge, no brains--they could only sit and wait to be cheated; there was no way out for them. No matter which party was on top, it was all the same for the country and for the people. Those who attained office received money from the Emperor, and of course the Emperor's money comes from the people. Those who couldn't get into office formed brawls for all they were worth, swindling the people until they could be swindled no more, then uniting with the military to squeeze some more out of them. As the number of brawls increased, the people's suffering became greater and the country became poorer."

Again I interrupted: "You mean there aren't any good men in the brawls? Not a single one who is working for the country and for the people?"

"Of course there are. But good men have to eat too. Even revolutionaries want to make love. Eating and making love require money. So promoting the revolution gives way to devising a method for getting money. One can never turn back--revolution, politics, country, people...money."

"Then people who have an occupation, who have food to eat, don't have anything to do with political movements?" I asked.

"The common people can't revolt because they don't understand anything, and a wealthy man, even if he has a lot of knowledge, doesn't dare revolt because if he makes a move the Emperor or the military men or the brawl men will take his property. If he moves with the tide and buys a small office, he can still hold on to a little property, though he can't keep it all."

"Those who are in politics have attained a position from which there is no retreat. As long as they are in the brawls they can eat; if they get out they lose their livelihood. Therefore, revolution has become an occupation. Thus, the result of these years of brawl politics is manifest in two phenomena. First, in politics there are only movements, there are no reforms. The more developed democratic thought becomes the more impoverished is the position of the masses. Second, as the number of brawls increases the youth become more and more shallow. They all watch politics and ignore their studies, and if they do have a sincere desire to save the country, and do manage to get some political power, then they can only stand and stare because they don't have the strength or the knowledge to meet the situation.

"In the long run the members of the older generation get their wishes. They too are without knowledge, but they came into the world with many more evil ideas than the young folks. The youth, having no real knowledge but wanting to put politics to use, must ask the older generation to supply the evil ideas. So revolution generates revolution, and the ones who really hold the power are still that pack of old foxes. The youths themselves are completely inept while the older generation is extremely crafty. Everyone seems to think that politics is just finagling. If the finagling is successful all desires are realized; if it is bungling everything collapses. So present-day students don't want to study; they want only to memorize a few new phrases and to learn a few more evil ideas. Then they figure they can depend on their natural talents in politics."

I let Young Sye rest a little while, then reminded him, "You still haven't said anything about everybodyovsky."

"Oh, yes. As the brawls increased the people became poorer because the officials attended only to the brawls and neglected the economic question. Then finally came everybodyovsky. It was brought in by the people, by the economic question. After a number of years of revolution the Emperor still had not fallen. Whatever brawl arose, the Emperor would announce that he was in complete agreement with that brawl's proposals and, moreover, that he wanted to be its leader. He would secretly shell out a little money so that he could really take the position of leader in the brawl. There was once a poet who praised the Emperor as the 'Lord of the Ten Thousand Brawls.'

"Then came everybodyovskism and, unlike the other revolutions, this time the Emperor was actually killed. With the Emperor dead, real political power was held by the brawl--the Everybodyovsky Brawl. Many people were killed because this brawl wanted to exterminate all except the real peasants and workers. Killing people wasn't a new idea, of course, for Catland has always been quite liberal that way. Nor is killing off all except peasants and workers an impossible plan. However, cats are after all cats, and after the killing gets going pretty well a kind of pattern is always worked out. Those who offer money don't seem to get killed and those who have someone to intercede for them are not liquidated. So those who deserve death aren't killed and those who don't deserve it lose their lives. When those who should be dead are not killed, they can mix into the brawls and spread their evil ideas. As a result, more people are killed every day, with never an explanation given. Also, everybodyovskism gives everybody jobs which accord with their own desires and provides equal payment for all. The aims of this kind of system are 1) to rebuild the economic system and 2) through education to build up faith in everybody living for everybody. But the men in our Everybodyovsky Brawl have no understanding whatsoever of economic questions; they know even less about how to set up a new system of education. Thousands are killed and the populace reacts with a blank stare.

"They plan to work through the farmers and the laborers, but they haven't the least understanding of what 'agriculture' is or what 'labor' means. They divide the land equally, plant a few poppi trees, and while the poppi trees are maturing everyone starves. As for the workers, they are quite willing to work, but there is no work for them to do. More people must be killed--they think if the embarrassing surplus is killed off everything will be all right. Somewhat like saying if your skin itches you should slice it off and the itching will stop.

"Everybodyovskism has been just like the other political systems that have come from abroad. In other countries they are like good medicine given to combat an illness, but as soon as it gets to us it's as if we were trying to find capital crimes to be guilty of. We ourselves never take any thought,

never look at the problems, so we get only the miseries that come with revolution; we don't derive even the least of its benefits. When other people have a revolution it's always to put into effect new proposals, new plans, but when we have one it's only to brawl. We simply have no understanding, and since we have no understanding we turn from acting against situations to acting against persons. And because the action is against persons, we forget that lofty character is necessary for carrying out the business of revolution and we attack each other, using the lowest and most vile tactics. So, after several years of everybodyovskism, the only things we know are to kill people and to stare blankly.

"Now the head of the Everybodyovsky Brawl has become Emperor--and even this is no cause for wonder in this country of ours. From the beginning no one has understood what politics is. Everybodyovskism didn't work as it was supposed to, so why not at least get an Emperor out of it? Having an Emperor saves us the trouble of thinking. As it is today we still have an Emperor, the Emperor is still 'Lord of the Ten Thousand Brawls,' and Everybodyovsky is included in this ten thousand."

Tears fell from Young Sye's eyes.

16

Even if what Young Sye said was true, it certainly wasn't constructive criticism. What's the good of being so pessimistic? Of course I came from peaceful, happy China and so I couldn't help feeling that there was still hope for Catland. A person who is not ill never finds it easy to understand why a sick person is so pessimistic. However, hope is a thing that we must always have--it's a duty of mankind. Lack of hope is a sign of self-abandonment. Hope is the mother of accomplishment. I felt certain that if the cat people would gather all their feline energy into a united effort they could hardly help produce some results. From what I had seen and heard I knew well enough that there were many, many things that limited the development of Catland, that prevented politics from getting on the right path, but the cats were after all human in every respect, and the human being is a creature who can overcome all difficulties.

I decided to go look for Big Sye and ask him to introduce me to a politician. If I could meet a few clear-headed people, I might get opinions more genuine, more valid, than Young Sye's criticisms. I really ought to go out first and have a look at "the people," but because of their fear of foreigners I couldn't think of a way to get together with them. Of course politics is not easily made clear to people who don't understand affairs. On the other hand, when you have this kind of a populace it is easier to put some political measures into effect--if there are sincere politicians who are willing to work for the country and for the people. I'd better first go and look for my "ideal cat."

I came upon Big Sye just as he was planning a party--and I was to be included among the guests. Since he was an important personage there would certainly be some politicians among the guests. This was an excellent opportunity for my observations.

I hadn't been to this side of the street for several days, but it was as busy as ever. There was an antlike bustle--but without the diligence of ants. I couldn't understand what it was about this broken-down city that attracted so many people. Perhaps--I had another thought--the villages had already fallen into complete ruin, and the city was at least better than the countryside. And it was better than before. There had been a lot of rain lately and the streets had lost their stench. The heavens had thoughtfully taken care of the cleanliness movement.

Although I arrived at the appointed time, Big Sye was not at home. The servant who received me was the one who had brought my food when I was in the poppi grove. As he felt that we were old friends he told me, "If the appointed time is noon, then you should come in the evening; if it is evening, come at daylight. Sometimes, too, it is all right to let a couple of days pass. This is our custom."

I appreciated his guidance, and I went on to ask him what other guests had been invited. I thought that if there were going to be none of the people I wanted to meet I'd not bother to come back.

"The guests are all important people," he said, "otherwise a foreigner couldn't be invited."

Good. I would certainly come back. But where should I go in the meantime? I had an idea! There were still a few national souls left in my pocket. I pulled them out and gave them to my old servant and everything was taken care of. I just stayed on the top of the house and quizzed him about things. A national soul is the key that opens the mouth of any cat man.

"What do all these people in the streets do for a living?" This was my first question.

"These people?" he asked, pointing to the sea of people in the streets. "They do nothing at all."

"Then how do they get food to eat?"

"They don't eat food. They eat poppi."

"And where does the poppi come from?"

"For every one person who is an official a multitude of people have poppi to eat. These people are all friends and relatives of officials. The big officials plant poppi, sell part of it, and keep part of it to distribute among their friends and relatives. The lesser officials buy poppi, keep some for themselves, and distribute some to their friends and relatives. Those who are not officials just sit and wait for poppi."

"Naturally there are many people who are officials?" I asked.

"Except for those who are idle, all are officials. I too am an official," he smiled faintly. Perhaps this smile was a kind of revenge for my having treated him lightly.

"Do all officials have money?"

"Yes. Given to them by the Emperor."

"If no one plants crops, no one works, and nothing is produced, how can the Emperor have money?"

"By selling the national treasures and selling land. You foreigners like to buy our treasures and our land. Have no fear that there won't be any money coming in."

"Ah, yes," I thought, "the museum--and the library. The pieces fall into place."

"How about yourself," I asked, "don't you think that selling the treasures and the land is a bad thing?"

"Anything is all right just so long as there is money coming in."

"In sum, you don't have any economic problem at all?"

Apparently this question was a little too deep for him. He hesitated a long time before replying: "In past years we pretended to have economic problems, but no one talks about them any more."

"In past years people also planted crops and worked. Right?"

"Right. Now the countryside is practically bare. When the people of the city want to buy things, they can buy from foreigners; there's no need for us to plant crops or to work. So everyone is idle."

"In that case, why do some people still serve as officials? If you're an official you can't be idle, can you? Whether you are an official or not you still have poppi to eat. Why tire yourself out being an official?"

"Oh well, if you're an official you get more money and besides having poppi to eat you can buy a lot of things from abroad and you can have several wives. If you're not an official you just have your little share of poppi to eat and that's all. Anyway, being an official is really not tiresome. There are many officials and little work. Even if one wants to work there's really no work to do."

"Since there is nothing else to eat, how could the late Ambassador's wife give up poppi?"

"If you want to eat food, that's possible too, though very expensive. Meat, vegetables, everything must be bought abroad. When you were in the poppi grove and insisted on having food to eat, you were a terrible expense to our master. Madam Ambassador was a queer woman. If she had been willing to eat poppi it would have been supplied for her, but as she insisted on eating food no one could afford to give it to her. She had to take those eight fairy foxes out and gather wild grass and wild vegetables to eat."

A fine bunch of queer ones you are, I said to myself. You're not even as good as ants and bees. Whether they have an economic problem or not, they go right on working. Cat people have no politics or economics worth talking about, but you still can't quit wrangling and fighting. I wondered what god had produced this batch of cheap goods. They had neither the instincts of ants and bees nor the wisdom of men. They had schools but no education, politicians but no politics, men but no character, face but no shame.

In any case, I had still to see their political leaders. Maybe they had a lofty plan for the solution of the country's difficulties. I wondered if they couldn't simply divide the poppi evenly among the populace and have a poppi everybodyovskism. This would be treading on dangerous ground, though. They must retreat--prohibit poppi, restore agricultural operations--if they were to avoid complete destruction. But who could bear this great responsibility? Unless they could change from living like flies to living like men there was no hope. And what a quantity of energy, resolute effort and determination would be needed for that jump! I felt almost as pessimistic as Young Sye.

Big Sye returned. He was much thinner than the poppi grove days, but he looked even more cunning and crafty. Not even bothering with a polite greeting, I immediately asked, "Why are you having guests?"

"No reason. Just for a chat."

I knew very well that there was some special reason, but I didn't press him further.

The guests began to arrive. They were all people I had never seen before and were completely unlike ordinary cat people. As soon as they saw me they all said, "Old friend, old friend." I said quite bluntly that I was from Earth. This was intended to mean that "old friend" was inappropriate, but they seemed to take the bitterness in the words for sweetness, and it was still "old friend, old friend."

Ten or fifteen guests came. My luck was good; they were all politicians.

The ten or fifteen could, according to my observations, be divided into three groups: the first was the Big Sye group. They said "old friend" with extreme naturalness, but with an expression that indicated they could not help saying it this way. Those in this group were all a little bit older. I thought of what Young Sye had said--"old foxes."

The second group were somewhat younger. They showed special enthusiasm in their politeness toward foreigners and were always smiling. Their smiles, however, were so empty you knew immediately their pride was all in the fact that they had just learned a few of the old foxes' tricks--though they couldn't yet do anything clever or unusual.

The third group were the youngest. Their "old friend" was very forced, as if they were still a little embarrassed about it. Big Sye gave this third group a special introduction: "These old friends have just come over from that side." I didn't quite know what he meant, but I didn't want to ask. After while it came to me--"That side" was a school. These must be new hands who had just entered politics.

I would watch and see how these who had just come from that side mixed with the old foxes.

This was the first time I had attended a party in Catland. When the guests were all assembled they began by eating poppi. This was as I had thought it would be. After the poppi was eaten I got ready to watch the initiation, and sure enough, it started. Big Sye spoke: "In order to welcome the old friends who have just come over from that side, we're going to let them have first pick of the girls."

The newcomers were laughing, winking, showing their bashfulness and their pride, and muttering "Everybodyovsky, everybodyovsky." I felt a pain in my heart. So this was their everybodyovskyism! When they were on that side, they had taken up the ovsky cause with one voice; now as soon as they arrived at this side they were going to everybodyovsky the whores. The end. What more could be said. I could only watch.

The girls arrived and poppi was passed around again. Now a little bit of pink color could be seen under the grey hair on the faces of the young politicians, and they were stealing glances at Big Sye. He laughed and said, "Follow your inclinations, gentlemen. Please make yourselves at home. Don't stand on ceremony." Leading the girls by their hands, they went down to the lower floor. Needless to say, Big Sye had already prepared a place for them to pursue their pleasure.

When they had gone down Big Sye looked toward the older and middle-aged politicians and laughed. "Good. Now that they're out of the way we can talk about political and economic matters."

I had guessed right. There was a reason for having guests.

"You gentlemen have already heard?" Big Sye asked.

The old men made no sign at all. They seem to be absorbed in their own thoughts. One of the middle-aged ones was just about to nod, when he looked at the others, quickly scratched his head and looked at the sky. I had to laugh.

After a long wait another middle-aged one said, "I've heard a little bit, but I don't know, I really don't know, whether or not it's true."

"It's true! My soldiers have been defeated!" Big Sye said with great concern.

They fell silent again and sat like simpletons for a long time, even breathing with restraint, as if they were afraid of injuring the hairs of their nostrils.

"Gentlemen, should we get a few girls to keep us company?" Big Sye made the proposal, and everyone came alive. "Good, good. We can't come up with a good plan if we don't have girls. Please call some girls."

Another bunch of prostitutes arrived and everyone was extremely happy.

The sun was about to go down, and no one had yet raised a single question having to do with politics.

"Thank you, thank you." They all left, leading the girls by their hands.

The young ones crawled up from below. Their faces had lost all trace of red and now showed a faint grey-green color. They didn't even say "Thank you," but just muttered "Everybodyovsky" as they stumbled out.

I thought a civil war must have gotten started, Big Sye's troops had been defeated, and he was asking the others for help. Their refusal to help was probably not a very serious matter. But Big Sye wore an expression of great urgency. I moved nearer to him and asked, "How were your soldiers defeated?"

"We've been invaded!"

17

The sun had almost disappeared behind the horizon and there was not a soul in the streets, but slogans had already been written on the walls. "Resist to the end!" "To save the country is to save yourself!" "Drive out the foreign invaders!" My head was spinning. Big Sye's "We've been invaded!" was still ringing in my ears. He had apparently been frightened out of his senses; otherwise why wouldn't he tell me any of the details? Still, if he was scared witless how had he remembered to give his party and to provide prostitutes for entertainment? It was all beyond my understanding. Seeing that bunch of politicians, who knew the country had just been invaded and yet spent the evening playing with girls and didn't say the first word about national affairs, made it completely impossible for me to understand how cat men's minds operated.

I went back to Young Sye's house, wondering what he would be doing at a time like this. He was nowhere to be seen, and he didn't come home all night.

The next morning there was still no sign of Young Sye, and Poppi and I decided we might as well see what was going on at the palace. The palace was the biggest building in the Cat City, though it was not the most beautiful, and today it was especially ugly. There were soldiers outside the wall, soldiers on top of the wall, soldiers everywhere. Filthy mud was piled on top of the walls and the moats were filled with putrid water. I asked Poppi what was the reason for all this filth.

She explained: "Foreigners dote on cleanliness, so every time word comes that foreign armies are approaching, we put rotten mud and stinking water all around the palace, thinking that if they get this far they won't be able to go directly into the palace because they're afraid of dirt."

I couldn't even laugh.

Several heads appeared over the top of the wall and Poppi got excited. "A decree, an Imperial decree!"

"Where?" I asked.

"Just wait."

We waited and waited and still nothing happened. Then finally one of the men on the wall threw down a stone that had something written on it. Poppi's eyes were better than mine; she read it and let out a yelp.

"What is it?" I asked, becoming a bit anxious myself.

"The capital is being moved! The Emperor has left! He's gone, he's gone. What'll we do?"

As I tried to calm her, another stone was thrown from the wall. "Quickly, Poppi, read it."

"The army and the populace are not permitted to leave. Only the Emperor and the officials are moving." She read aloud for me to hear.

Ah, I respected this Emperor; I only hoped he would drop dead on the road. But now Poppi was cheerful again. "That's all right. As long as everyone else stays here I won't be afraid."

But how can everyone stay? I wondered silently. If the officials are all gone, how can those who stay here get poppi to eat? Another decree came down from the top of the wall. Poppi read it:

"From today forward the Emperor will not be called 'Lord of the Ten Thousand Brawls.' As the end of our great trouble approaches, all the people of the nation should be of one mind and one purpose and the Emperor should be known as 'Lord of the One Brawl!' All soldiers and citizens must continue to resist the enemy. Country must come before self."

And yet the Emperor was the first to run, I thought to myself.

We waited for some time but no more decrees came down. The men climbed down off the wall. I wanted to have a look at the various government offices. Poppi wanted to go back to see whether Young Sye had returned home, so we separated.

I wanted especially to see the Foreign Office, but when I arrived there was no one outside the yamen. It seemed to be deserted. As there was no one around I decided to chuck ceremony and go in. There was not a soul inside and the rooms were completely bare except for a few big stone tablets. On each of these tablets was engraved "Protest." Apparently whatever happened the Foreign Office would send a "Protest" tablet. So their foreign officers were just protest specialists. I thought perhaps I could find a despatch or two from other countries, but there was none to be seen. Apparently the other countries completely ignored Catland's "protests." I recognized that this method of foreign relations would be very saving of time and trouble.

If this were all there was to the Foreign Office surely there could be no point going into the other yamens. I read the name plates as I walked past: Prostitution Bureau, Office of Poppi Control, Bureau for Boycotting Foreign Goods, Meat and Vegetable Office, Public Sale of Orphans Office--and many, many more. It seemed to me that there were too many offices and bureaus, but doubtless the cat men thought there were hardly enough, since everyone not completely idle had to be an official.

I walked on to the west, thinking I might go out and take a look at the foreign settlement. I hadn't yet seen it. Before I had gone far I came on a big crowd of students kneeling in front of a large stone tablet, on the front of which was engraved "Tablet of the Great God Marsky." I knew if I walked right up on them they'd all be frightened away, so I slipped up quietly and knelt at the back of the crowd.

At the front, near the tablet, a student stood up, turned toward the others and shouted, "Long live Marskyism! Long live Everybodyovsky! Long live Pulopulopulapu!" Then he launched into a speech:

"We must overthrow the other gods and believe only in Marsky. We must kill the heads of our families and our teachers and regain our freedom. We shall overthrow the Emperor, put Everybodyovskyism into effect, and welcome the foreign invaders. We must go now and capture the Emperor and hand him over to our foreign comrades. This is our only opportunity. We must act now! After we have captured the Emperor we will exterminate all teachers and heads of households. Then the poppi will all be ours, the women will all be ours, the people will all be ours--our slaves! Everybodyovsky is ours. Marsky has decreed it! Let's go to the palace now!"

But no one moved. "Let's go now!" somewhat plaintively. Still no one moved.

"How would it be if we first go home and kill our fathers?" Someone proposed. "There are too many soldiers around the palace."

"But if we kill our fathers who will give us poppi to eat?" someone else in the crowd asked.

A reply came: "Get all the poppi in our hands first; then kill our fathers."

"Let some of us go to kill the Emperor and others go to kill the fathers." Another proposal.

"But Immortal Marsky said only that we should kill the Emperor. He didn't tell us to kill our fathers." A student at the rear of the gathering spoke hesitantly.

"Counterrevolutionary! Kill the one who interprets the Great God Marsky's words incorrectly!"

I thought surely this would start a fight, but still nobody moved. Slowly the crowd began to break up. One by one they stood up, faced the tablet, said in a low voice "Long live the Great God Marsky," and walked away.

Again I was nonplussed.

I went back to look for Young Sye again, hoping I might go to the front lines with him. Poppi was there waiting for him when I arrived. He still hadn't shown up. I thought about going on out to the foreign settlement to see if I could learn something about the country that had invaded Catland, but I was afraid Young Sye would come back while I was gone. I tried to question Poppi about the other countries of Mars, but she was only expert on the fineness of foreign face powders. She could only shake her head and say, "Where is he? Why doesn't he come back?"

We waited a whole day and still there was no sign of Young Sye. All the officials had left and the streets were not as busy as they had been. There was no way to get any news of the front or anywhere else for that matter. Although the word "country" was constantly on everybody's lips here, no one knew anything about national affairs.

Poppi didn't want to stay any longer. She kept repeating, "We'd better leave too. Everyone else has gone. Flower has gone, too." I just shook my head and didn't say anything in reply.

After another day had passed Young Sye returned. His old always-cheerful expression was gone from his face. Poppi was so happy she could only stand with tears in her eyes and stare at him. I let him rest awhile before inquiring, "How's it going?"

"No hope," he breathed.

After resting a long time, Young Sye said he wanted to go look for his father. Poppi held tight to his hand and said, "Wherever you go, I'm going too." She seemed to have made up her mind not to let him out of her sight again.

He said, "All right." I knew he was not really thinking of finding Big Sye. I said I would go with them.

We started out to the west. All the people we met on the road were headed in the opposite direction, even the soldiers. Involuntarily, I spoke out: "If the enemy is to the west, why are the soldiers going toward the east?"

"Because the east is safer!" The noise of Young Sye's teeth gritting was louder than the sound of his voice.

We met many scholars. Still separated into groups of old and new style, they were all going toward the east. As one group passed, one of them called to Young Sye, "We're going to the east to have audience with the Emperor. A meeting of scholars in the Imperial presence! Saving the country is everyone's business, but we scholars must decide on the plan of action. We shall keep the Emperor informed on how many soldiers there are at the front, and if the enemy intends to attack the Cat City we shall advise him to move the government. Glorious Emperor! He doesn't forget the scholars. Glorious scholars! We are completely faithful to the Emperor."

Young Sye ignored the man who spoke to him, but as soon as that bunch had passed he was surrounded by another group of scholars. These looked as sad as if they had just lost their fathers. They had not been called by the Emperor and they wanted Young Sye to intercede for them. Young Sye ignored them, too.

More soldiers. Each one of these was wearing a circle of red rope around his neck. I had never seen soldiers like these before but I was afraid to ask Young Sye about them. I knew he was still angry about the scholars who had spoken to him. He saw the question on my face and with a wild laugh he

said, "You don't know what army these troops belong to? They're the Nationalovsky Army. Other countries also have armies like this, with the red rope around their necks as their special mark, but in other countries the Nationalovsky Army is always extremely patriotic, thinking only of country, never thinking of themselves as individuals. Not so our Red Rope Army! As you've just seen, it's transferring itself to the east. Perhaps this too is because they love their country so much. If they were killed by the enemy then they wouldn't be able to go on loving their country. One has to think of it that way, you know." And he let out another mad laugh. I was beginning to think he was really losing his wits. Afraid to say anything more, I walked on, keeping one eye on the Red Rope soldiers who kept streaming past.

In the middle of the column there was one whose rope was thicker than any of the others and who was riding on the heads of ten or fifteen men. Young Sye saw him and said to me in a low voice, "He's the commander of the Red Rope Army. He wants to get all governmental authority in his hands because men in other countries have gained their power this way. He hasn't yet taken over all governmental powers, but he is more dangerous than anyone else. He's dangerous because of his cunning. He's on his way now to fix the Emperor and put his plan into action."

"Would this perhaps mean some hope for Catland?" I asked.

"Cunning is enough to get the reins of government but strengthening the country is quite another question. He is thinking only of his own ambitions. The word 'country' is not in his mind at all. Those who really love their country are spilling their blood on the front lines."

I saw that the arrival of the enemy in Catland was the fuse of civil war. I had seen so many red ropes that I could no longer see clearly. I seemed to see a red sea of blood with these soldiers all floating in it.

In a little village we stopped to rest. I say village; it was really no more than a few fallen-down houses. There was not a human being there besides ourselves. There was no need to ask Young Sye what had destroyed the village. Knowing how many revolutions Catland had had and realizing that each revolution meant another war, it was not hard to imagine how the buildings had been destroyed and the people who lived there had either been killed or had fled to the city.

Suddenly Poppi jumped to her feet. "Look over there!"

Over to the west a great cloud of dust rose into the air. His lips trembling, Young Sye said quietly, "We're beaten."

19

"Run and hide. Quickly!" Although Young Sye was very calm, his expression showed great concern. I had never seen his eyes shine so. "Our soldiers have no courage when they are going into battle, but when they are defeated they get wild. Quickly, run and hide." Still facing to the west, he said to me, "My friend, I entrust Poppi to your care." I saw that he was determined to die now.

Poppi held to his hand and said, "We'll die together!"

I didn't know whether to hide or wait for death with my friends. Young Sye wouldn't listen to my protestations that there was as yet no need for him to think of dying. I knew that if we didn't get out of sight soon the retreating soldiers would be upon us and it would be too late to think of hiding. Finally I managed to drag Young Sye into the ruins of an old house. Poppi naturally followed.

The soldiers came streaming past. They were a ragged, downcast lot, without the slightest semblance of order. They no longer carried even their wooden clubs but were completely empty-handed. Like so many walking dead, they hurried to the east, not even looking ahead of themselves but staring

blankly at their feet. After awhile they began to thin out and I thought I would try to catch one of them and question him about the battle. I didn't want to risk being captured by a group of them so I waited until they were coming in small groups and one by one. As a single soldier approached and there were no others in sight, I left my hiding place. When he caught sight of me this cat soldier was frozen to the spot, like a little frog when it sees a water snake. It was no trouble at all for me to pick him up and carry him back to our ruined house. He neither struggled to get free nor let out a sound. Besides having been petrified by the sight of me he was probably nearly dead from running.

I laid him down and waited for him to come alive. Slowly he opened his eyes. When he caught sight of Young Sye he started to lunge for him. I grabbed his arm and prevented him from moving and he sat there and stared hate at Young Sye.

Young Sye ignored the soldier. He just sat and held Poppi's hand. I knew that if I questioned the cat soldier gently I would get nowhere; I would have to frighten him. Roughly, I asked him, "Why was the army defeated?"

He looked blank, seemed to have forgotten where he was. After awhile he pointed to Young Sye and yelled, "It's all his fault!" Young Sye laughed.

"Speak." I ordered.

"It's all his fault." I waited for his anger to subside enough so that he could continue. "We didn't want to fight. He made us go on. The enemy offered us money but he wouldn't let us take it. He couldn't control the Red Rope Army and the other armies, but we had to obey him because we're his father's army. All the others took money from the enemy and pulled back peacefully. We alone were left to fight. The others pulled out and returned to the city to do some profitable looting, but now we don't even have our clubs. How do you expect us to live!"

The more he talked the more interested I became. He continued, "Our land, our houses, our families were all taken from us by them!" (pointing to Young Sye). "Today this, tomorrow that; more and more officials; the people poorer and poorer. Rob us, cheat us; finally there is nothing left to us but to become soldiers. So we become soldiers--and we're used to help them maintain their positions as officials. Then the foreigners come to steal their property, and they send us to die on the battlefield..."

He paused for breath and I took this opportunity to ask, "If all of you know that they are bad, why haven't you killed them and taken matters into your own hands?"

He rolled his eyes and for awhile said nothing. I thought he had not understood my question. Then, "You're saying we should revolt? Useless. It's been tried too many times. We only lose what little we have. Even if some land is divided up among us, we don't get enough to raise a dozen poppi trees. If we don't plant poppi we go hungry; if we plant poppi we still go hungry. No one has a solution. Especially the young ones--they're so good at working out plans, but their plans don't fill an empty gut. And any plan that doesn't fill a stomach is a stupid plan . . ."

"So now you soldiers have come back to kill him?" I pointed to Young Sye.

"Exactly. We've come to kill him. He made us go and fight. He wouldn't let us take money from the enemy!"

"After you've killed him, then what?" I asked.

The soldier had no answer.

In all my experience in Catland Young Sye was the first person I had come across who had any sense, and yet he was hated like this. I knew it would be pointless to try to explain to this soldier that Young Sye was not the one he should hate.

I set the soldier free and wondered what would be the next step for the three of us. It was getting dark and I knew that with runaway soldiers scattered everywhere it wouldn't be safe for us to stay here much longer. I hit upon the idea of going to the foreign concession and suggested this to Young Sye. He shook his head. He was quite willing to die, but he wouldn't lose face by seeking protection from the foreigners.

As night drew on everything became still. Young Sye, Poppi and I fell silent. It seemed that there was nothing more we could say to each other. Yet we didn't sleep. I stared up at the stars, and I could tell from the sound of their breathing that Young Sye and Poppi were even wider awake than I.

20

I awoke with a start from two shots fired nearby. Where Young Sye and Poppi had been last night there were now two corpses. Blood was running from them and their eyes were open and staring. My pistol was lying by Young Sye's side. I had known that Young Sye didn't care about living any longer, but I hadn't expected this. I should have stayed awake and watched him. My only friend! And Poppi! Oh, what was I to do now!

It was just getting daylight and everything in the vicinity was just as it had been before dark the preceding evening. I put my hand on Young Sye's body. It was still warm, but there was no life in it. I knew I couldn't stay here any longer. Half unconscious, I started back toward the city.

There was not a soul on the road, only corpses lying here and there along the way. I hurried on and before long I had reached the city. As soon as I passed through the city gate, I stopped cold. Dead bodies were strewn all over the streets and there was not a sign of life in the whole city. I ran to Young Sye's house. There was nothing there except a pile of rubble. I ran on through the city and out to the east. I knew that everyone must have fled in that direction.

As I reached Big Sye's poppi grove I saw crowds of people coming out of the east and hurrying back toward the city. As I watched more and more people came on. There were many officials still leading groups of soldiers and running for all they were worth toward the city. Each of them seemed to be trying to get ahead of the others, and they were all fighting amongst themselves as they ran.

I caught sight of Big Sye running at the head of one little group of soldiers. I ran up to him, hoping to discover what was going on. He seemed to be glad to see me but he said nothing. I asked him why everyone was running back toward the city.

"Please come along with me," he panted as he ran on. "The enemy will soon reach the Cat City. Maybe they're already there."

My mind was a little more at rest. The time had probably come when they couldn't fight any more so they were all going to unite in an effort to protect the city. But if this was true why were they fighting each other along the way? I told Big Sye that if he didn't tell me why they were going back I would not go with him.

Reluctantly he said, "We're going to surrender. Whoever gets there first can surrender the capital and gain favor with the enemy."

"Oh!" I said, "I don't have the time to go with you to surrender." And I turned and started back in the other direction.

Just as I started to walk away, they all stopped running. I looked around at those who had been leading the flight. The enemy had arrived.

"This should be good," I thought. "I'll watch the surrender."

Now there was a struggle to be first to surrender individually to the enemy. Big Sye had been leading the pack and he was already on his knees, but the leader of the Red Rope Army came flying past and knelt in front of him. Now all the cat men were on their knees facing the enemy officers and soldiers.



This was the first chance I had had to see what these enemy soldiers looked like. They were shorter than the Catlanders and rather stupid looking. They all bore expressions of extreme contempt and hatred and carried short bars that looked as though they were made of metal.

As soon as all the cat men were on their knees the leader of the enemy troops raised his hand and the rank of soldiers who were immediately behind him brought their sticks down on the heads of Big Sye and the others who were nearest them. One stroke, their bodies quivered, and they lay dead. When the other cat men saw this they jumped up in a body and lit out like so many thousand roosters with knives at their necks. The enemy soldiers didn't run after them but, kicking aside the bodies of Big Sye and the others, marched slowly and deliberately forward. I followed them.

They kept up a steady pace. Any wounded cat men who were found lying in the way were quickly dispatched with the soldiers' short clubs. I couldn't believe that these dwarf soldiers had a very advanced culture. Still, maybe they were somewhat more advanced than the cat men. Whatever else was to be said about them, they at least had a concept of "country." They weren't like the Catlanders, who knew only "self."

I followed the dwarf soldiers on and on. Fortunately I had a few poppi leaves in my pocket; otherwise I would have starved to death. Perhaps I could have begged something from these foreign soldiers, but I didn't dare to get near them for fear they might think I was spying on them.

Finally they stopped to rest, and one group of them started digging a great hole in the ground. I didn't have to wait long to see what this was for. They started rounding up cat men and driving them

into this hole. They were preparing to bury them alive! I remembered that Young Sye had said the enemy would not stop until Catland was completely destroyed and the people were exterminated. Half out of my mind from the sights I had seen, still I couldn't tear myself away from the scene of action. I stayed with the troops as they covered the countryside searching for every living Catlander.

Finally I saw a few cat men who seemed intent on putting up a last fight. But they were still separated into small groups. Even about to die they didn't understand what cooperation meant. I came upon a little hill on the top of which were about ten cat men. Apparently this was the only patch of ground that the enemy soldiers hadn't covered. Before long the ten had reduced their number to five by fighting among themselves. By the time the dwarf soldiers found them, there were only two left--probably the last two cat men alive. These two were so tightly locked in combat that the soldiers couldn't separate them.

Instead of killing the two, the dwarf soldiers put them into a wooden cage and let them go on fighting each other. They continued their struggle until they were both dead. The cat men had completed their own extermination.

* * * *

I remained on Mars another half year before I came upon a French exploration plane and was able to return to my great, glorious, free China.



NOTES TO THE TRANSLATION

(The numbers indicate the pages of the text which contain the incidents or descriptions referred to by the notes. Translations from the French are my own and I am responsible for any errors or inaccuracies in them. -- J. E. Dew)

p. 1. China has long been known, at least to sanitation-conscious Westerners, as a land where flies abound. The Red Chinese government announced that a two-month campaign by school children netted 53 tons of flies--as well as 1,000,000 rats, 850,000 sparrows and 5.7 tons of mosquitoes. (See the New York Times, August 13, 1958.) Perhaps this will delight the sanitary engineer but not the efficiency expert.

p. 2. This description of the language of Catland is similar to the impression of the Chinese language which foreigners sometimes have. Arthur H. Smith, a missionary to China in the last century, had this to say about it:

[after a few words on lack of formal inflection and lack of distinction between nouns, adjectives, and verbs] We are not about to complain that the Chinese language cannot be made to convey human thought, nor that there are wide ranges of human thought which it is difficult or impossible to render intelligible in the Chinese language (though this appears to be a truth), but only to insist that such a language, so constructed, invites to "intellectual turbidity" . . . (Chinese Characteristics, pp. 82-83.)

The Chinese writing system is, of course, "terribly complicated."

pp. 2-3. According to H. G. W. Woodhead, the opium poppy has been known in China for twelve centuries and its medicinal use known for nine centuries. In the middle of the 17th century the practice of mixing it with tobacco for smoking was brought by the Dutch from Java to Formosa, whence it spread to the mainland of China. Later it was smoked without being mixed with tobacco. Foreign opium was first introduced by the Portuguese from Goa at the beginning of the 18th century, and

In 1729, when the foreign import was 200 chests, the Emperor Yung Cheng issued the first anti-opium edict, enacting severe penalties on the sale of opium and the opening of opium-smoking divans.

The edict produced few results, however, and by 1790 the import was over 4,000 chests annually. In 1796 opium smoking was again prohibited, and in 1800 importation of it was again declared illegal. By 1858, when the foreign powers forced legalization of the trade, the importation had increased to 70,000 chests. (The China Year Book, 1913, pp. 623 ff.)

Between 1906 and 1911 the Chinese government enacted provisions for regulation of opium smoking and import, and in 1911 the British Parliament showed its cooperation by forbidding its shipment to China. (Goodrich, A Short History of the Chinese People, p. 223.) One important effect of this measure was to increase the domestic production of the poppy in China. Vain attempts to stop its production and consumption continued under the Republic. In the fall of 1928 the Nationalist Government announced a renewed suppression campaign, warning that after March 1 of the following year opium addicts were to be classified as criminals and treated accordingly. Total prohibition of the cultivation of the poppy was to be achieved within the year. (The Chinese Recorder, October, 1928, pp. 609-611.) In 1948 the Nationalist Government was still continuing its work of absolute suppression. (Goodrich, op. cit., loc. cit.)

In discussing the early opium trade with China, C. P. Fitzgerald says:

The Chinese officials at Canton . . . connived at the trade as openly as the government of India. The decrees were a dead letter in Canton. Every official drew his regular revenue of bribes from the opium dealers, and none profited so handsomely

as the preventive forces charged with the suppression of the traffic.

He goes on to say that any moral objections to opium did not have nearly so much to do with the decrees of prohibition as the facts that the trade was draining silver from the country and was not providing any revenue for the government. (China, A Short Cultural History, pp. 564-565.)

pp. 3-6. In conjunction with our narrator's comment on Catlanders' idea of "sincerity," his discovery of their lack of any conception of mutual trust of one another, and Big Sye's exhibition of opportunism, it is interesting to note some of the results of Harold R. Isaacs' interviews with 181 Americans in high positions, regarding their impressions of Asia and Asians. He says:

. . . in the heaviest count against the Chinese, 64 individuals mentioned some item along the scale of dishonest, devious, unreliable, opportunistic, shrewd. Indeed, almost no person with any substantial experience with Chinese failed to mention it as one of his images or impressions of at least some Chinese. Some even did so admirably . . . (Scratches on Our Minds, p. 74.)

p. 6. "Catland's laws do not apply to foreigners." It was not until 1943 that the United States and Britain gave up their rights to extra-territoriality in China--whereby citizens of these countries were not subject to Chinese law courts but only to the consular courts of their own government. (Goodrich, op. cit., p. 236.)

p. 15. Mi, "to deceive, confuse, fascinated," is the name in Chinese of Young Sye's number one girl friend and is also the name of the leaf, mi-yeh, which is Catland's opiate. I thank my mentor for the happy suggestion of the use of the term "poppi," a word which both carries the association of an opiate and can easily be used as a girl's name.

pp. 17-19. Chapter 9 is a tirade against a social system that places women in such a position that they can be treated as the personal property of their men. Translations of a number of documents concerning the efforts of the women of China to emancipate themselves from such a system can be found in Père Léon Wieger's Chine moderne. I shall quote from only one of them, an extract from the Women's Weekly, of Peking, May 7, 1924:

Students of the University of Peking, Misses Mao Yi-ming and others . . . having ascertained that in China antique despotism continues to weigh upon the women . . . that before the law women continue not to be the equals of men. . . that women's education has not developed as it should . . . that women do not enjoy the financial independence which is their right . . . have resolved to create an organization of like-minded persons, which will be called the Society of United Women and will march at the head of the column of the women of China . . . On the 5th of May the Society issued a proclamation announcing its program, of which this is a resume:

1. To destroy the principles of the old Chinese moral tradition.
2. To destroy in particular the antiquated principle that a man is a more noble being than a woman.
3. To abolish commercial marriages through go-betweens.
4. To abolish the system of the 'great family' and polygamy.

(Chine moderne, vol. 5, pp. 247-48.)

p. 20. The Cat City's "Cleanliness Movement" recalls an anecdote recounted in Arthur H. Smith's discussion of China's lack of sanitation. He begins by saying, "Few inconveniences of the Celestial Empire make upon the Western Mind a more speedy and a more indelible impression than the entire absence of 'sanitation'." He remarks that it would be difficult to say which of China's cities is the filthiest, and recounts this tale:

A visitor from one of the northern provinces boasted to a resident in Amoy that, in offensiveness to the senses, no city in south China could equal those of the north. . . the city of Amoy was extensively traversed, and found to be unexpectedly clean--that is, for a Chinese city. Jealous for the pre-eminence of his adopted home, the Amoy resident claimed that he was taken at a disadvantage, as a heavy rain had recently done much to wash the streets! (op. cit., p. 138.)

pp. 22-23. Young men, as well as girls, struggled to free themselves from the bonds of the traditional family system, in which spouses were chosen not by the young people concerned but by their families. Wieger includes the following in his Ephémérides for the year 1925:

September 20, 1925. General Li Ching-lin, Governor of Chih-li, takes up the question of connections between men and women students. . . "The professors have confused the ideas of good and bad in the minds of our young people. Immorality is increasing. Too many female students openly seek the affection of male students, many preach free love, and there are even some who marry without informing their families. Henceforth all marriages contracted without the authorization of the parents shall be null, professors who practice free love shall be dismissed, wanton students shall be expelled, the seats of students of the two sexes shall be separated, and teachers will in their speech show respect for the young ladies who hear them." (Chine moderne, vol. 6, p. 54.)

pp. 26-30. A picture of the state of China's educational system in the twenties can be gained from criticisms published at that time. I shall give a few quotations:

July 15, 1926, from an exhortation addressed to the people at the time of the entry of the forces of the south into the campaign against the north:

Teachers are no longer paid, but live by their wits, and students see their studies continually interrupted by the passage of troops. Some schools are burned down and others are converted into barracks. Teachers have been seen working as coolies and students begging in order to live. (Chine moderne, vol. 7, p. 108.)

October, 1926, from the Chinese Educator, on the very sore question of opposition to the "aggression" committed by foreign schools in China:

. . . throughout the country [are] foreign schools, where a religious and colonial education is given. Against that, our Chinese schools offer nothing except an education that is venal and without a goal. In order to recover our monopoly on education it is absolutely necessary that we take the four following measures . . .

1. Set ourselves against education without a goal. In most of our schools, the teachers are benumbed and without ideals. . . the students leave the schools just as they entered, without orientation for their future, without any sort of definite goal. . .

2. Oppose venal education . . . Many present Chinese schools . . . are quasi-commercial affairs, enterprises for making money. They admit without examination all those who pay the fees exacted . . .

3. Forbid religious education. The education of foreign sects is spreading . . . over all of China . . .

4. Forbid colonial education. In India, English schools made Englishmen of the Indians. In Annam, French schools made Frenchmen of the Annamites. In the Philippines, American education is making Americans of the Filipinos. Here occidental education is making Europeans of the Chinese . . . (Ibid., vol. 7, pp. 231-232.)

October 21, 1936, results of a survey to determine the occupations of college graduates:

Of graduates in China, 22 to 36 per cent remain unemployed. Of graduates abroad, 50 to 60 per cent remain unemployed. The reason seems to be that the greatest number of them have studied politics and sociology rather than commerce and industry. . . (*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 237.)

From a letter written by the Chinese Consul-General in Paris, published May 5, 1925:

The first Chinese students sent to Europe and America toward the end of the Ch'ing, were mature men, of the aristocratic class and destined above all for high military positions . . . Then . . . the sons of functionaries . . . Returning, these gentlemen became civil or military dignitaries after the old fashion and did not advance the country a single step on the road of progress. Then came the . . . students who went abroad for education at their own expense and for their own pleasure . . . But, rich young gentlemen for the most part, after their return, some did not care to do anything and others were unemployed for political reasons. Finally, after the Great War . . . the People took the road abroad. We do not yet know what will be the outcome of this for the country . . .

The great defect of all education given abroad to young people who are more than twenty years of age is that it is extremely superficial . . . (*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 166-67.)

Chiang Kai-shek, in an address given in Peking, July 21, 1928:

. . . what of the little civil wars between professors and students which have, in recent times, absorbed the attention of our schools? . . . I say only that they must be swept clean, in such a manner that nothing will be left of them, not even a memory.

But formerly, when we did not have these riots, our schools were asleep. Neither the professors nor the students exerted themselves. They worked--the teachers for a degree and the students for a diploma--apathetically, barely enough to get by, no more . . . Man is distinguished from the animals by his mind, say the philosophers. That mind is formed and developed by education. It is in their schools that the countries known as the Powers work out their power . . . (*Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 126-29.)

pp. 36-37. From Wieger's Ephémérides for the year 1926:

August 14. The Cabinet in Peking names 21 guardians for the National Museum (ancient Imperial treasury of the Ch'ing). Their number does not stop the disappearance of the art objects.

pp. 38-39. "Everybodyovsky" and "everybodyovskyism" are ta-chia-fu-szu-chi and ta-chia-fu-szu-chi-chu-i. That they are intended as a representation of "Communism" is apparent from the description of the system and from the Russian-sounding fu-szu-chi or "ovsky" ending.

pp. 38-42. Concerning political conditions in the young Republic, Isaacs says:

. . . the Republic soon confirmed the doubters and discountenanced its few friends. Parliament, elected in 1912, was a travesty of democracy. Votes were openly sold and openly quoted on the market. The members, when they met, devoted all their time to appropriating large salaries to themselves. Without roots in Chinese history, without tradition and without honesty, the organs of democracy presented a shameful picture of irresponsibility and corruption. (The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution, p. 38.)

Speaking of the early years of the Republic, Clyde says this "was a period in which the revolutionary

cause was almost as chaotic as the Chinese society in which it struggled to exist." (The Far East, p. 509.)

Chiang Kai-shek himself said (in the same address quoted in the note for pages 59-69):

Our China is actually the poorest, the weakest, and the most miserable country in the entire world. Because of internal disorder, it has not been possible to apply any of those resolutions taken to remedy this unhappy state. Everything is deranged in China . . . everything is to be done over again . . . (Chine moderne, vol. 8, pp. 126-27.)

From a warning about the danger of Bolshevism, published by students of the Chinese Customs College June 20, 1925:

Everyone knows that the Russians have conceived the plan of sovietizing Asia . . . Their projects succeed best with peoples who are weak and malcontent. . . We are weak . . . and malcontent. . .

Moscow has already spent millions to prejudice the intellectuals, especially the "students," against conditions in their countries. Results have been mediocre, most often negative . . . Of special note is the fact that students enticed to Peking by the Soviet theories, and those who have gone to Moscow to study their operation, have declared them inapplicable. (Chine moderne, vol. 6, pp. 202-03.)

pp. 44-46. If the picture of officials, in a time of national emergency, interested only in disporting themselves with prostitutes seems too exaggerated, note a comment by H. G. W. Woodhead on the National Assembly which opened on April 9, 1913:

The Assembly soon succeeded in thoroughly discrediting itself. Party feuds were so bitter that the transaction of any ordinary business became impossible. The members led such profligate lives that one Chinese paper reported that a certain Li Lo-keng made a practice of going round to houses of ill-fame in certain districts daily, banging a drum and calling upon legislators within to wake up and attend to their duties. (Adventures in Far Eastern Journalism, p. 39.)

p. 47. The phrase translated as "be of one mind and one purpose" is yi hsin yi te, the next to the last line of the national anthem of the Nationalist Government.

Compare this proclamation with the following excerpt from the Chinese government's notification to the country of the national peril after Japan's occupation of Manchuria:

. . . the Government will do all that it can for the salvation of the country. But, in this situation of exceptional gravity . . . we announce . . . that the people in China must keep to the three following principles . . .

1. Strict harmony of minds . . . ["Union étroite des coeurs." "yi hsin yi te"?]
2. Steadfast calm . . .
3. Unremitting effort from all, everyone in his own occupation, to the view of producing everything of which we shall have need . . . (Chine moderne, vol. 8, pp. 199-200.)

pp. 47-48. The terms "Marsky" and "Marskyism" are ma-tsu and ma-tsu-chu-i. Ma-tsu is, incidentally, the name of a sea goddess, but ma is also the first character of the standard transliteration of "Marx" and is used in combinations (e.g., ma-p'ai, "Marxist Party") as a translation of "Marx."

p. 50. Compare the following extracts with the complaints of the soldier captured by our nar-

rator in Catland:

The present state of suffering of the people is extreme! The grain whose production has cost the peasants their sweat and blood is requisitioned by the armies or pillaged by brigands. Their work animals are taken away and eaten. Men are held captive for ransom and women are shamefully treated. Those who are able to save their lives after having lost all else count themselves lucky . . . To preserve their lives many have been reduced to banditry . . . (*Chine moderne*, vol. 7, p. 108.)

The soldiers are for the most part peasants or workers who have enlisted against their will to avoid perishing from famine. Besides the hard life of the camps they must endure the brutalities of their worthless chiefs. To preserve their lives they must, on order, kill soldiers who are their fellow citizens and civilians who are their brothers. (*Ibid.*)

With the value of military pay notes decreasing more and more, the troops of Mukden are extorting money and merchandise wherever they find it. (*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 237.)

. . . China is not a nation. It is a collection of provinces which devour each other, divided into fiefs by generals who use their soldiers only for their personal enrichment. If a new world war finds us in this state, with what power can we oppose foreign invasion? Each province has its war lord (*tu-chun*) and each of these generals has his own opinions and views. They all say, it is true, that they act for the good of the country, but you know very well, citizens, that anyone who does that . . . (*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 94.)

* * * * *

General. One article, appearing on the occasion of "National Shame Day" in 1924 (May 7 and 9, the time of Japan's proclamation, in 1915, of her "Twenty-one Demands" on China), covers so many of the points represented in *City of Cats* that I have left extracts from it for the end rather than identifying them item by item with the text. It is addressed to the students of China:

Students, for several years you have held many demonstrations, the success of which has been mediocre. Why is this? For many reasons. I shall enumerate the principal ones . . .

The people to whom you address yourselves are not able to comprehend you because they are too illiterate . . .

Misery is accompanied by filth . . .

In other countries evil is concealed. In China it is openly exposed . . .

Among our students there are those who work, but they are only a small number; the great majority do nothing. Parasites, these young people fatten themselves on the labor of others. Then when they have received from some place an unmerited certificate of studies, they pass their useless lives in "society" . . .

Banditry has become an endemic evil here, nearly a national institution . . .

In times past the conduct of Chinese officials was never exemplary. It is now worse than ever. Pilfering has always been, and is still, their great preoccupation. The same thing must be said of the recently appointed members of Parliament. We call ourselves the Republic of China, but up to now there has not been a shadow of democratic organization in our country . . .

The entire world has now united to deliver us from the scourge of opium, and the result is that we smoke it more than ever . . .

In the Occident, cooperation in all its aspects has diminished poverty and increased comfort. Industrial, commercial, and agricultural cooperation . . . But we know nothing of all that . . . In England, cooperation has no more ardent apostles than the students, but up to now our students have not concerned themselves with with this question . . .

Vice exists everywhere. The English drink brandy and the Americans lynch negroes; but their governments seek to stamp out these evils, by education and by punishment. We have neither education nor sanctions . . . Our own evils injure us much more than the so-called foreign oppression we complain so much about. . .
(Chine moderne, vol. 5, pp. 98-99.)

[Compared to the American pastime, British tippling sounds positively engaging (I presume, also, that Fr. Wieger or the Chinese original meant 'whiskey'). It should be noticed throughout the above that the tendency in China has been to attack social evils *en bloc* and carrying large, white banners of moral purity. This is still the approved method: its weakness lies in the fact that the 'all-or-nothing' approach most often yields nothing--as it did for the Cat People. J.I.C.]

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